



## FRAGMENTS

One of the most typical ways to proofread is to read your paper out loud to yourself. Although you may find a few grammatical errors using this method, you will probably miss fragments. Fragments are incomplete sentences that cannot stand alone. When you read your paper from start to finish, fragments may not be apparent because you are reading for content. Fragments are obvious when taken out of context.

Look at the following phrases. Ask yourself if each phrase could stand alone (that is, could you say it to someone and be understood):

**Wrong:** Because the job was in Springfield.

**Right:** Give me the assignments for tomorrow's class.

The first phrase is a fragment because it cannot stand alone (dependent). Information is missing; it almost seems like an answer to an unspoken question. The last phrase is a complete sentence because it can stand alone (independent).

### Proofreading for Fragments

To find fragments, read backwards sentence-by-sentence, and ask yourself if each statement is complete or incomplete. The following example includes fragments:

I read passages of Spanish literature. While at the university. I translated them into English. And wrote responses to the reading in Spanish.

By reading backwards, two fragments become apparent:

While at the university.

And wrote responses to the reading in Spanish.

Fragments are easy to correct once you identify them. Simply ask yourself if the fragment goes with the sentence before or after it. "While at the university" goes with the sentence before it, so take out the period to combine the two phrases. Likewise, "And wrote responses" goes with the sentence before.