

SENTENCE



A **sentence** is a series of words that puts a clear idea or picture in your mind, without confusing you or saying too much at once.

TWO MUSTS!

A sentence **MUST** begin with a capital letter.

this is not a sentence.

This, however, is a sentence.

A sentence **MUST** end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

Most sentences end with periods.

Did you know that questions end with question marks?

Listen to me! If you shout, end with an exclamation point!

This is not a sentence

Need a SPOON?



A sentence is like a spoon.

Sound weird? Imagine this:

When you cook, people eat your food. When you write, people read your words.

A spoon brings food to a mouth, and a sentence brings ideas to a mind. The trick is to use a spoon (a sentence) that makes it easy to eat (read). If the spoon (the sentence) is missing a part, or is too complicated, it's difficult and frustrating to eat (read).



Problem #1:

Part of spoon missing

The sentence doesn't have enough parts to put a clear picture into your mind.



Here are some examples of spoons—um, sentences—that aren't doing their jobs. Read each one by itself, and you'll ask, "Huh?"

- Yesterday, too.
- Always, they always go to Canada.
- Melting in the sun.
- Hector and Suzanna's brother.
- Melting slowly, all afternoon, in the hot summer sun.
- My family, including my two dogs, no matter what the weather is like or how hard it's raining outside.
- Next week, my car.



These are called "sentence fragments."

The problem is that the sentences are missing something. If you notice, it's not about how long the sentences are, it's whether or not the sentences have enough information to make sense.

How to fix it: add words so the sentence makes sense

Here's where your brain comes into play. Nobody can tell you exactly how to fix a sentence that's missing a part. You have to read it, figure out what's missing, and add words. If it makes sense to you, it makes sense!

- Traffic was terrible yesterday, too.
- My neighbors always go to Canada every summer.
- The chocolate bar sat there all afternoon, melting in the sun.
- Hector and Suzanna's brother are on my bowling team.
- My family, including my two dogs, no matter what the weather is like or how hard it's raining outside, always visits my grandparents on Sunday evenings after dinner.
- Next week, my car is getting a new paint job!



Problem #2: Too many spoons

The sentence is trying to feed you too much at once.



Here are some examples of sentences that are saying too much at once. Read each one by itself, and you'll think, "Whoa!"

- I like dogs my sister likes cats my father wants to move back to Philly so he can eat hoagies yesterday I got a new pair of shoes dogs are fun.
- We saw this great movie on TV about a cattle rancher who just thinks about himself it was in black and white but it was still awesome in the movie there was a dead cow who died from a disease the selfish guy wanted to sell the bad meat but his father didn't his father said it was wrong but the guy argued they had a fight this sentence needs to stop.
- I like writing my sister does too she writes about cats.



Too many spoons! These sentences are giving you too much at once. It's hard to digest what they say because they run on and on and on.

How to fix it: **divide it up into separate sentences**

Take the sentence that says too much, and chop it up into smaller sentences. First, read the problem sentence, divide it up into separate sentences, and read them. Keep changing things until the sentences make sense to you. Here are some examples of how to fix the sentences from above.

- I like dogs. My sister likes cats. My father wants to move back to Philly so he can eat hoagies. Yesterday I got a new pair of shoes. Dogs are fun.
- We saw this great movie on TV about a cattle rancher who just thinks about himself. It was in black and white, but it was still awesome. In the movie there was a dead cow who died from a disease. The selfish guy wanted to sell the bad meat, but his father didn't. His father said it was wrong, but the guy argued, and they had a fight.
- I like writing, and my sister does too. She writes about cats.



Problem #3:

Spoons too small

The sentences you write are like a series of spoons that don't scoop enough.



Okay, you're not writing sentence fragments (parts of sentences), and you're not writing run-on sentences (separate sentences smashed together). But you also have to avoid writing too many little sentences, or your writing will sound childish, like this:

- **I like dogs. My sister likes cats. She has a cat. Her name is Snowball. Snowball is white. She has gray eyes. Snowball scratched me once. I want a dog. I can't have one. My sister is allergic to dogs. I pet my neighbor's dog sometimes. His name is Goliath. He is a small dog. His name is funny. Goliath likes beef jerky. He likes to play fetch.**



Right about now, don't you want a larger spoon? We have to combine these sentences and make them longer somehow.

How to fix it: combine them so they sound better

Try using commas and words like *and*, *but*, *since*, *because*, and so on. No book can tell you exactly how to improve the sentences you write, because books can't read. Fixing this sort of thing takes time and practice with a teacher.

Here's an example of how to combine the little sentences in the previous section into longer sentences that flow better.

- **I like dogs, but my sister likes cats. She has a cat named Snowball, who has white fur and gray eyes. Snowball scratched me once. I want a dog, but I can't have one because my sister is allergic to dogs. I pet my neighbor's dog sometimes. His name is Goliath, which is a funny name because he's a small dog. Goliath likes beef jerky and likes to play fetch.**



Name: _____

Date: _____

SHOW
THAT
YOU **KNOW**

Complete all eleven tasks and show that you know what a grammatically correct sentence sounds like.

15

11
tasks

Read each sentence and circle **fragment** if it's not a complete sentence, **run-on** if it says too much in one sentence, or **OK** if it looks good.

1 Every weekend, I have to help my mom clean the house.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

2 About four years ago.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

3 My mom hurt her back about four years ago in a bad car crash.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

4 She's feeling better now the doctor told her not to bend over and lift anything heavy that's why I help her.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

5 One day, when I was picking up some boxes, I found a twenty-dollar bill on the floor under the boxes.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

6 I knew it wasn't mine I never lost twenty dollars I couldn't figure it out.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

7 Wondering what to do.

Fragment Run-on OK

1



8 I decided to show the money to my mom to see if it was hers.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

9 She didn't know whose it was she was just as surprised as I was.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

10 She told me.

Fragment Run-on OK

1

This paragraph contains three sentence fragments and a run-on sentence. Rewrite it in a series of correct sentences.

5

11 Yesterday at dawn, seven police officers. Surrounded a house located at 1211 Cattleya Avenue. Because someone called about a man screaming inside. When they got there they banged on the door when nobody answered they banged on it again and looked in the front window it was the TV that was making the noise the police left after that.

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