

# Five Major Errors in Sentence Structure

## 1) Fragments

When one of the slots of a sentence (**subject, verb, or the object**) is empty when there should be information there, the error is known as a fragment.

*All of the students in the English classes at the Health Sciences Center.*      WRONG

*Bones, which are strong but light.*      WRONG

*All the seats in the waiting room were taken, so had to stand.*  
WRONG

Every sentence must have a **subject, verb, and object**. **Transitive verbs** require an object, while **intransitive verbs** do not.

*All of the students in the English classes at the Health Sciences Center (subject) take (verb) the same exams. (object)*      CORRECT

*Bones (subject) are (verb) strong but light (object).*      CORRECT

*All the seats in the waiting room were taken, so the patient (subject) had to stand (verb).*  
CORRECT

## Fragments: Exercise

**Directions:** The following sentences are fragments. Add or delete words to make them complete sentences.

- 1) Fingerprints, which create a rough surface for the fingers and help a person grasp things.
- 2) After the surgery, the patient's vital signs in the recovery room for 6 to 8 hours.
- 3) The heart is a muscular organ pumps blood throughout the body the size of an adult fist.

- 4) The outermost part of the tooth, which is called the enamel, the hardest material in the body.

## 2) Subject / Verb Agreement

The subject and verb must agree in number.

*Some patients with cancer takes opioids to relieve agonizing pain.*

WRONG

*My brother or my sister bring my mother to the hospital every day.*

WRONG

*Some patients with cancer take opioids to relieve agonizing pain.*

CORRECT

*My brother or my sister brings my mother to the hospital every day.*

CORRECT

### Subject / Verb Agreement: Exercise

**Directions:** In the following sentences, write the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

- 1) The blood \_\_\_\_\_ (to transport) oxygen, nutrients, and other chemicals throughout the body to every tissue and \_\_\_\_\_ (to carry) away waste materials. In addition, this substance, which is vital to survival and good health, \_\_\_\_\_ (to defend) the body against infections.
- 2) The total length of all the blood vessels \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) 100,000 kilometers, and a typical adult \_\_\_\_\_ (to have) about 6 liters of blood in his body!
- 3) White blood cells \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) larger than red blood cells but less numerous. There \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) three main types of white blood cells in the body, and each of the three types \_\_\_\_\_ (to play) a different role in defending the body against infection.

- 4) A CT scan and MRI \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) carried out.  
A CT scan or MRI \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) carried out.  
Imaging tests, such as a CT scan or MRI, \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) carried out.  
A CT scan, in addition to an MRI, \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) carried out.  
An MRI, which is used to visualize soft tissues, \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) carried out.

### 3) Comma Splice

Two complete sentences cannot be joined by a comma alone. This error is called a comma splice.

*The blood tests will be performed on Thursday, the doctor will use the results to determine if surgery is necessary.* WRONG

#### Five Ways to Repair a Comma Splice:

- 1) **Add one of the following words after the comma: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.**

*The blood tests will be performed on Thursday, **and** the doctor will use the results to determine if surgery is necessary.*

- 2) **Add a semicolon between the two complete sentences.**

*The blood tests will be performed on Thursday; the doctor will use the results to determine if surgery is necessary.*

**3) Separate the two complete sentences with a period.**

*The blood tests will be performed on Thursday. The doctor will use the results to determine if surgery is necessary.*

**4) Change one of the complete sentences into a which-clause.**

*The blood tests, which the doctor will use to determine if surgery is necessary, will be performed on Thursday.*

**5) Change one of the complete sentences into a dependent clause (*because ...*, *if ...*, *when ...*, *etc.*). A dependent clause has a subject and a verb, but it is not complete and depends on the independent clause.**

*After the blood tests are performed on Thursday, the doctor will use the results to determine if surgery is necessary.*

## **Comma splice: Exercise**

**Directions:** Repair the following sentences, which contain comma splices.

- 1) A person with chronic pain has a few options to manage his condition. He can take medications, such as codeine, he can try alternative approaches, for example, acupuncture.
- 2) The human body contains over 600 skeletal muscles, they make up 40% of the total body weight.

- 3) Magnet therapy involves placing small magnets close to the body in order to relieve muscle or joint pain, it is an experimental treatment method, it is popular among professional athletes. People who use magnet therapy believe that the body's cells contain tiny electromagnetic fields, the electromagnetic fields become out of balance when disease is present. The National Science Foundation states that magnet therapy is not at all scientific, it is a billion-dollar industry!
  
- 4) Babies are born with 300 to 350 bones. The baby grows, some of the bones fuse together, by adulthood, most people have 206 bones.

## 4) Run-On Sentences

A complete sentence cannot be placed right next to another complete sentence without punctuation. This error is called a run-on.

*The students went to the Blood Bank they donated blood.*

WRONG

*The patient's vital signs are monitored antibiotics are administered to prevent infection.*

WRONG

Run-on sentences are repaired in the same way comma splices are:

- 1) use a **comma + FANBOYS**
- 2) use a **semicolon** between the two sentences
- 3) use a **period**
- 4) change one sentence into a **which-clause**
- 5) change one sentence into a **dependent clause**

*When the students went to the Blood Bank, they donated blood.*

CORRECT

*The patient's vital signs are monitored, and antibiotics are administered to prevent infection.*

CORRECT

## Run-on sentences: Exercise

**Directions:** Repair the following run-on sentences.

- 1) During approximately 3,300 to 700 BCE, the average life expectancy at birth, or LEB, was only 26 years because of injury, disease, and a lack of resources the average world LEB was 71 years in 2015.
- 2) In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the average LEB for members of the English aristocracy was 64 years they had access to a more well-rounded diet, clean water, safety, and warmth.

- 3) The common folk did not their average LEB was 35 years.
- 4) The bubonic plague killed approximately two-thirds of Europe the LEB for nobility dropped to 45 who mainly contracted the airborne bacillus *Yersinia pestis* through contact with asymptomatic but newly, infected household staff.
- 5) Before the discovery of antibiotics, the *Streptococcus pyogenes* bacterium caused half of all global post-birth deaths the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacterium killed 80% of people with infected wounds.
- 6) In 1928, Alexander Fleming, a bacteriologist at London's St. Mary's Hospital, found that a mold, penicillin, on a discarded culture plate had an antibacterial action to the *Staphylococci* group of bacteria was a common source of serious and often deadly human infections.
- 7) American infant mortality rates declined by more than half during the 1930s and 1940s the discovery and widespread use of antimicrobial agents, the development of fluid and electrolyte replacement therapy, and safe blood transfusions saved the lives of many mothers and their babies.
- 8) Between 1944 and 1972, the average global LEB increased by 8 years largely resulted from the introduction of antibiotics in the 1930s.

- 9) While the first antibiotics were being prescribed, Sir Alexander Fleming theorized about the emergence of drug-resistant bacteria within 4 years of the introduction of penicillin, cases of drug-resistant infections were being reported by physicians scientists began to develop stronger antibiotics.
- 10) The United Nations estimates that the global population of people over 60 will double between 2007 and 2050 people are living longer fertility rates are decreasing.
- 11) Monaco is currently the country with the highest average LEB of 89 this is because of its small, wealthy population, an efficient state-funded healthcare system, and the Mediterranean climate and diet.

## 5) Parallelism Problem

Words in a list must be parallel, which means that they are the same part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb).

*The three stages are **preparation, the actual procedure, and to recover.***

noun                  noun                  verb

WRONG

*The patient in room 1505 likes **to read** and *playing chess.**

infinitive                  gerund

WRONG

*The three stages are **preparation, the actual procedure, and recovery.***

noun                  noun                  noun

CORRECT



*The patient in room 1505 likes **to read** and **to play chess**.*

infinitive      infinitive

CORRECT

*The patient in room 1505 likes **reading** and **playing** chess.*

gerund      gerund

CORRECT

## **Parallelism: Exercise**

**Directions:** Correct the following sentences, which all contain a parallelism problem.

- 1) A person with influenza often experiences a fever, muscle aches, and feels tired.
- 2) To prevent cavities, a person should floss his teeth and to brush them every day.
- 3) While meditating, a person sits in a quiet place, relaxes his muscles, breathes slowly, and he repeats a single word with every breath.
- 4) Bacteria can enter the body through air that is breathed, a break in the skin, or when a person eats contaminated food.
- 5) The pain associated with a heart attack is often severe, sudden, and begins in the chest.
- 6) Many people with multiple sclerosis have trouble walking and maintain their balance.

- 7) Embolisms often occur in the larger arteries, especially in the neck, brain, legs, arms, and the kidneys.
  
- 8) When a person is dreaming, it is possible for him to see, hear, and even sometimes to smell things.