

Sentence Structure and Errors

Phrases, Clauses, Fragments, and Run-Ons

1) PHRASE: a group of two or more words that work together but do not have a subject or a verb. Phrases are not complete ideas. There are five types:

A. Noun Phrase: a group of words consisting of a noun (or pronoun) and modifiers (articles, demonstratives, possessives).

- I saw a scary movie at midnight.
- Marie went out.
- Your black cat is always outside.

B. Adjectival Phrase: a group of words with an adjective and modifiers.

She wears yellow socks.

- I ate some sugar-coated.

C. Adverbial Phrase: a group of words with an adverb and modifiers, modifying a verb, adjective, or another adverb.

- He carefully lifted the trophy.
- I go to the gym every day.

D. Verb Phrase: A verb or auxiliary + verb, functioning as a verb in the sentence.

- Dave was walking the dog.
- She will go to the party.
- My mother prepares lunch.

E. Prepositional Phrase: A preposition + object.

- The rat runs into the box.
- The cat in the window was sleeping.

2) CLAUSE: a group of words that includes a subject and a verb. There are two types:

A. Dependent Clause: usually starts with a conjunction (when, because, if, since, etc.). It cannot stand alone as a complete sentence.

Example: I was sleeping when Jessica came.

B. Independent Clause: expresses a complete thought and can stand alone.

Example: I was sleeping.

3) SENTENCE: a group of words that expresses a complete idea and ends with a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark. Every sentence should contain at least one independent clause. There are three sentence types:

A. Simple Sentence: contains one subject and one verb.

Example: The dog bites the child.

B. Complex Sentence: contains two subjects and two verbs.

Example: We went outside after the rain stopped.

C. Compound Sentence: Has two verbs and two subjects, joined with a semicolon or FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

Example: I was ill, so I didn't go to school.

4) SENTENCE STRUCTURE ERRORS

A. Run-On: occurs when two complete sentences are written as one without proper separation.

Examples:

- Run-on: I was ill I didn't go to school.
- Correct: I was ill; I didn't go to school.
- Correct: I was ill, so I didn't go to school.

Note: Never use only a comma between two complete sentences (comma splice error).

B. Fragments: incomplete sentences due to lack of subject, verb, or independent clause.

Examples:

- After he sent me a letter. (lacks independent clause)
- Was watching a movie. (lacks subject)