WHAT ARE THEY?
Sentence fragments are *incomplete* sentences. Complete sentences state complete thoughts and contain both a subject and a verb expressing an action done by or to that subject. Fragments confuse readers because the lack of a subject, verb, or both makes your meaning incomplete and unclear. Although sentence fragments appear in creative and informal writing, avoid them in academic and professional writing.

EXAMPLES
INCOMPLETE SENTENCES/SENTENCE FRAGMENTS
What I really need. (incomplete thought—what do you need? when? from where? from who?)
Earning a passing grade on the exam. (incomplete thought—who is earning the grade? when? why?)

COMPLETE SENTENCE
I (subject) really need (verb) to earn a passing grade on the exam. (complete thought/complete sentence)

IN THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES, THE SENTENCE FRAGMENTS ARE UNDERLINED.
Incorrect: I need to go to the Writing Center. Because I need tips on writing an essay exam!
This fragment begins with a subordinating word. Remove the period and connect the fragment to the main clause.
Corrected: I need to go to the Writing Center because I need tips on writing an essay exam!

Incorrect: Biked to campus as usual. I was worried I would be late to my exam.
This fragment has no subject. Rewrite by adding a subordinating word (if) and a noun (I) to clarify the action (rode).
Corrected: I was worried that I would be late to my exam if I biked to campus as usual.

Incorrect: Nervous and completely stressed-out students visible throughout the hallways.
This fragment lacks a verb. Change the verb form (from visible to were visible) to make a complete sentence.
Corrected: Nervous and completely stressed-out students were visible throughout the hallways.

Incorrect: Walking into the room on exam day, I was concerned when my professor laughed maniacally.
This fragment has no subject. Create an introductory phrase with a preposition (after) and a comma.
Corrected: After walking into the room on exam day, I was concerned when my professor laughed maniacally.

Incorrect: I got an “A” on my essay exam. Which isn’t surprising considering how calm I was.
This fragment lacks a subject. Make the fragment a non-essential phrase by using a comma.
Corrected: I got an “A” on my essay exam, which isn’t surprising considering how calm I was.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS
• Be aware that fragments are harder to identify when they are close to related sentences.
• Check to see if a group of words is a fragment by locating the subject and its verb.
• Check that the group of words expresses a complete thought: Ask yourself, “If someone walked up to me and said these words, would I be waiting for them to provide more information before responding?”
• Correct fragments by attaching them to other sentences or by revising them to include appropriate subjects and verbs.