

Common sentence problems

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| Sentence fragments | These are incomplete sentences because one or more of these elements are missing: | |
| | a verb | <i>The internet ^ an invaluable information resource.</i> <i>The internet is an invaluable information resource.</i> |
| | a subject | <i>^ Has many career prospects</i> <i>She has many career prospects.</i> |
| | a subject and verb | For example, <i>^^ a marked increase in enrolments.</i> For example, <i>there is a marked increase in enrolments.</i> |
| | a main clause | <i>^ Because the bus did not arrive.</i> <i>Because the bus did not arrive, I was late for work.</i> <i>I was late for work, because the bus did not arrive.</i> <i>^ So I was late.</i> <i>The bus did not arrive, so I was late for work.</i> <i>^ And I was late.</i> <i>The bus did not arrive and I was late for work.</i> <i>^ But the bus did not arrive.</i> <i>I waited for hours, but the bus did not arrive.</i> |
| Faulty parallelism | This problem occurs when sentence elements expressing two or more matching ideas or items in a series are NOT balanced or grammatically equal. | |
| | Aluminium is <i>light (adjective)</i> in weight, <i>strength (noun)</i> , and <i>resistance (noun)</i> to corrosion. Aluminium is <i>light (adjective)</i> in weight, <i>strong (adjective)</i> , and <i>resistant (adjective)</i> to corrosion. | |
| | Aluminium is remarkable <i>for its low density (phrase)</i> and <i>it is able to resist corrosion (clause)</i> . Aluminium is remarkable <i>for its low density (phrase)</i> and <i>ability to resist corrosion (phrase)</i> . Aluminium is remarkable <i>because it has low density (clause)</i> and <i>it is able to resist corrosion (clause)</i> . | |
| Redundant reference | For graph A about email use, it clearly shows that young people are ... Graph A about email use clearly shows that young people are... As for young people in particular, they tend to... Young people, in particular, tend to... | |
| Misplaced clauses/ clumsy word order | This problem happens when some dependent clauses (e.g. relative (which) clauses) are not placed in the correct position in the sentence, causing confusion as a result: | |
| | The camera cover is equivalent of a man's weight <i>which is made of strong plastic</i> must be able to withstand a force of 750N, <i>so that sharp camera parts cannot fall out.</i> Write two sentences: The camera cover is made of strong plastic so <i>that the sharp camera parts cannot fall out.</i> It must also be able to withstand a force of 750N, <i>which is equivalent of a man's weight.</i> | |
| Over-long sentences | Not only must the camera cover be made of strong plastic to keep the camera parts from falling out, but it must also be able to withstand a force of 750N, which is the equivalent of a man's weight. (Controlled structure, but probably far too long: 39 words) The camera cover is made of strong plastic to keep the camera parts from falling out. It must also be able to withstand a force of 750N, which is the equivalent of a man's weight. (General rule for better sentence control: 20-25 words/sentence) | |