

LOOKING AT YOURSELF AS A WRITER

Sentence fragments

An occasional sentence fragment, used deliberately, can be effective, but unintentional sentence fragments are serious errors. If you tend to write unintentional fragments, try to discover why.

CAUSE You worry that you will write a run-on sentence (a comma splice or a fused sentence).

CURE You are right to be concerned about run-on sentences, but you may be worrying too much about them while drafting. When you reach the editing stage of the writing process, try proofreading for both fragments and run-ons by using the flow charts on pages 195 and 203.

CAUSE Feeling that a sentence should be a certain length, you insert a period at some convenient point when it has reached that length.

CURE Make punctuation decisions based on sentence structure, not length. The following comma rules tell you when to use a comma (or no punctuation) instead of a period: P1-b, P1-e, P2-e, and P2-f.

CAUSE You are trying to emphasize the idea in the fragment by putting it in its own sentence.

CURE Consider using other strategies for emphasis, such as the dash or the colon. (See G5-b.)