

Where the Red Fern Grows

Lesson 1 - Understanding Sentences

How can you tell a complete sentence from an incomplete sentence? Usually you tell just by listening.

Incomplete Sentence (Fragment)

Everyday.

(What? Who does what everyday? I don't get it.

This is not complete.)

Incomplete Sentence (Fragment)

Every day, rain or shine.

(I don't care about the weather! Tell me who is doing what.)

Complete Sentence

Billy hunts.

(This is a very simple sentence, but it has a subject [Billy] and a verb [hunts]. We know what happened and who did it.)

Complete Sentence

Billy hunts everyday.

(Here is the same sentence with a little more information. There's no confusion here.)

Complete Sentence

Billy hunts everyday, rain or shine.

(Here is the same sentence with even more information, and it's still very clear.)

A complete sentence must have a subject and a predicate. The subject tells **who** or **what** does the action, and the predicate contains the **verb** and tells **what** the action is.

A verb is a word that expresses one of two things:

- Action: jump, scream, fly, run
- State of being: appear, seem, feel

A subject can be any of the following things:

- The person who does the action in the sentence.
Grandpa sells goods in his general store.
- The place that does the action in the sentence.
The general store swarms with people before the Fourth of July celebration.
- The thing that does the action in the sentence.
Flour and sugar are mixed together to make cookies.

- The person described in the sentence. Grandpa is happy when he makes a good sell.
- The place being described in the sentence. The general store is crowded on Saturday.
- The thing being described in the sentence. Cookies are best when the flour and sugar are fresh.

Subjects may come in different forms:

- One noun as the subject – Billy wants hound dogs.
- Two nouns as a subject – Little Ann and Old Dan are two dogs.
- One pronoun as the subject – He prays each night for dogs.
- Two pronouns as the subject – He and she are both still awake because of the coon hounds.
- A phrase – Staying awake all night is no fun.
- A clause – What makes me mad is all the noise!

Clause

when he gets the money

(This has a subject [he] and a verb [gets], but you're left dangling, aren't you? It's not a complete sentence. This is called a dependent clause. It depends on something else to make a complete sentence.

Complete Sentence

Billy will buy coon hounds when he gets the money.

(Now we know what's going on!)

Determine if the following are complete sentences or dependent clauses.

1. When I left my office that beautiful spring day.
2. I was walking along whistling when I heard the dogfight.
3. About twenty-five feet from me they caught him and down he went.
4. Down on my knees.
5. With one final whimper.
6. Where the alley emptied into the street, he stopped and looked back.

7. As I watch him disappear in the twilight shadows.
8. Whatever it was that had interrupted his life, he was trying to straighten it out.
9. As I turned to enter my yard.
10. As I caressed the smooth surfaces, my mind drifted back through the years, back to my boyhood days.

Phrase

the sound of the hounds

(We just saw that a clause has a subject and a verb.

There's no verb here; this is called a phrase. It could be the start of a great sentence, but it needs some help. It needs some action.)

Complete Sentence

The sound of the hounds echoed in Billy's mind
even after the night quieted.

(Now there's some action! It makes a very clear,
complete sentence.)

Tell which part of the sentence (subject or predicate) is missing in the sentence fragments below:

1. A whole bucketful of tears.
2. My dog-wanting.
3. Bawling and yelling for Mama.
4. Had a talk with him.

Let's build a few sentences.

Phrase

young Billy

Dependent Clause

by the time hunting season was over

Complete Sentence

By the time hunting season was over, young Billy
was a nervous wreck.

Phrase

our cat Samie

Dependent Clause

with one loud squall

Complete Sentence

With one loud squall, our cat Samie scooted under the barn.

Phrase

the glow of the fire

Dependent Clause

as I sat there in silence

Complete Sentence

As I sat there in silence, the glow of the fire grew larger.

Phrase

sparkled like a white star in the heavens

Dependent Clause

as I struck a match

Complete Sentence

As I struck a match, the smaller cup sparkled like a white star in the heavens.

Video on Sentence Fragments



Brain Pop

<http://www.brainpop.com/english/grammar/sentencefragments/>

Practice – Complete Sentence or Sentence Fragment?

1. I found some slick little trails out in the garden down under some tall hollyhocks.
2. Once I decided to make friends with him.
3. Thinking they were game trails.
4. Mama had another talk with Papa.

Go to your Student Packet and complete
Lesson 1 Practice for English.

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