A **fragment sentence** is a sentence that does not express a complete thought or action—a sentence that does not ‘do’ anything: ☒ The dog in the grass. A fragment sentence may even have a verb: ☒ The dog lying in the grass. Let’s make the sentence complete: ☑ The dog lying in the grass is tired.

Don’t confuse fragment sentences with **minor sentences**: No way. The more the merrier. These are not complete sentences but are fine in speech or in informal writing—but usually not in a formal paper.

A **run-on sentence** is where two sentences are connected with no punctuation: ☒ The fog was thick he could not find his way home. Split the two sentences with a period, semicolon, or a conjunction (and, but, or).

Suggestions
- Do not use a comma to link such sentences; use a period, a semicolon, or split the sentences.
- A sentence beginning with when usually indicates a dependent clause—it needs another clause in order to be a full sentence.
- It’s an easy mistake to have a let a very long sentence with no controlling verb fool you; it’s still a fragment.

Some of the following sentences are correct, and others are fragment or run-ons. Can you find out the problems?

1. Although he had been an often decorated soldier during the war and had fought many battles for the losing cause of liberalism in parliament.

2. This is going to be the most difficult exam of your college career, you had better start studying for it.

3. Knowing better than anyone else how the state legislature had ignored the needs of the community college system and created a crisis characterized by an uneducated workforce that had no place to go for proper training, Senator Fuentes began to lay plans for an education bill that took into consideration the needs of the state’s community colleges and the students who attended them.

4. Coach Barnes really wants this job with Notre Dame University he is very excited about returning to the college he graduated from.

5. Right after the Christmas holidays and during those three weeks before class begins in January.

6. She ran.

7. Perplexed by the rising rates of inflation and alarmed by the decline in major construction projects.

8. Betty realizes what she is doing, I think, but she is doing it anyway.

9. When Professor Pepin realized that the paper he had written on modern asthma treatments was going to be published by the medical journal.

10. If we’re ever going to get out of here in time, we’re going to have to re-write all these papers, set up the desks, clean the chalkboards, stack those books in the corner, and notify security about the broken window, the thermostat that Susan messed up, and the desk that was stolen before we even got here.