They exist disguised as complete and proper sentences. It’s up to you to identify and eliminate them.

**THE FRAGMENT**

(A.K.A.: Dependent Clause, Phrase)

This small piece of a sentence is often confused with a complete sentence. The key to detecting its presence is to ask these questions: What information is missing? Is the idea in the sentence incomplete?

Goes down to the river to swim.  

**Information missing:** who or what (subject) went (verb)? To make this a complete sentence, add a person or thing.

For example: John goes down the river to swim. The dog goes down to the river to swim.

Over the rainbow.

**Information missing:** who or what (subject) is over the rainbow, as well as, how (verb) he/she/it got there. Fragments which start with prepositions (words such as on, over, into, through...) usually need both a subject and verb to complete them.

For example: The cow jumped over the rainbow.

Until I got a cat.

**Information missing:** what happened before the cat came? This tricky fragment has what appears to be both a verb (got) and a subject (I), but words such as until, after, before, because, although, who, which, and that (known as subordinating conjunctions) can turn an otherwise complete sentence into a fragment, because they demand an explanation. The explanation portion of the sentence will always contain the main subject and verb.

For example: I was very lonely, until I got a cat.
Run-ons:
Fused Sentences and Comma Splices

A run-on sentence has two or more independent clauses, or sentences, that aren’t properly joined. One type of run-on is called a “fused” sentence, when 2 complete sentences are jammed together without any punctuation. Another type is called a “comma splice,” when 2 complete sentences are joined with a comma. These writing errors are usually disguised as one complete sentence, though they are actually two or more complete ideas that could stand alone as sentences.

Fused Sentence: The dog barked the cat ran up the tree.
Comma Splice: She tripped over the toy, her leg was injured.

The connection between ideas often makes it difficult to see that there are two complete sentences disguised as one. To detect a run-on, look for more than one subject and verb, and then check to see if each subject and verb phrase can stand alone as a sentence.

4 Ways to Fix a Fused Sentence or Comma Splice

Make two separate sentences
The dog barked. The cat ran up the tree. She tripped over the toy. Her leg was injured.

Use a semicolon
The dog barked; the cat ran up the tree. She tripped over the toy; her leg was injured.

Add a conjunction (and, so, but, or…)
The dog barked, and the cat ran up the tree. She tripped over the toy, so her leg was injured.

Place a comma before a conjunction when the conjunction joins 2 complete sentences!

Make one part of the sentence dependent on the other (use words such as while, after, although, because, until, if, who, which, that…)
While the dog barked, the cat ran up the tree. Because she tripped over the toy, her leg was injured.