

SENTENCE SMACKDOWN!

Learning
Subject + Verb
the Cool Way

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

A sentence must contain at least one subject and one verb, and it must form a complete thought. A fragment is missing a subject or verb, and/or it doesn't contain a complete thought.

AKA Incomplete Sentence, non-sentence, intentional fragment

Writer's should master the complete-sentence technique before getting fragment-happy.

--Bill Walsh, *The Elephants of Style*

STUDENT ERROR

When I was five. I had a Chuckie doll. I would scare everybody with Chuckie. Chuckie was about two feet, had orange hair, little red and white shoes, overalls, and plastic knife. I replaced the plastic knife with a real knife. To make Chuckie look more like the real thing. From the kitchen Drawer. Like a mini-butcher knife. I super glued it into Chuckie's hand. Ready for business.

BEHIND THE ERROR

- Typical student attempt at adding sophistication to sentences
- While trying to add some life and complexity to the sentences, this student creates fragments with his punctuation
- Student student writing skills haven't caught up to a growing intellect and the ability to express ever-more-complex thoughts
- The thinking needs this more a more sophisticated sentence form

MENTOR TEXT

They race. (p.5)
--Jerry Spinelli, *Loser*

Matt winces. (p.364)
Maria flinched. (p.366)
Matt froze. (p.370)
Matt nodded. (p.372)
--Nancy Farmer, *House of the Scorpion*

Tad watched. (p.6)
Blood flew. (p. 11)
He sprung. (p.128)
--Stephen King, *Cujo*

- The point of grammar is to help up write.
- Competent, confident writers know that an underlying structure holds some thought together and separates others.
- So, you need to be able to break down a sentence.
- This knowledge is the foundation for taking writing from chopping to flowing, from run-on to controlled.

subject + verb = a simple sentence

THE SENTENCE TEST

- Who or what did or is something?
- What did they do or what are they?

Example:

They race. (p.5)

--Jerry Spinelli, *Loser*

MENTOR TEXT

The lights cluster brilliantly up the street at Claudia's house.
(p.174)

--*Loser*

MORE EXAMPLES

Then he lowers his hand.

Who or what does something? (He) What does he do? (lowers) He lowers.

His ears echo the thousand warnings of his mother: "Don't cross the street."

Who or what does something (ears) What do the ears do? (echo). Ears echo.