How to Craft Clear, Complete Sentences

**What is a complete sentence?**

Every sentence must have a subject and a verb. A subject is the noun doing the action. A verb is the action done. Often, there is also an object, which is the noun acted on by the verb. By following this simple recipe, you can make clear, complete sentences.

Simplest sentence: The dog runs. In this sentence, “the dog” is the subject, and “runs” is the verb.

Add an object: Students love homework. In this sentence, “students” is the subject, “love” is the verb, and “homework” is the object of the verb love. (What do students love? They love homework.)

**Tip:** To keep sentences clear, keep subjects and their verbs close together.

**Incomplete Sentences:**

Sentences that do not have a subject and a verb are fragments, or incomplete sentences, and create grammatically incorrect (and more importantly, unclear) writing.

For example, “the importance of creating respect in the classroom” is an incomplete sentence because it lacks a main subject and verb.

To fix a sentence fragment, add a subject and/or verb. The sentence above can be fixed by adding both. For example, we could add “Teachers should understand” so it reads “Teachers should understand the importance of creating respect in the classroom.” “Teachers” is the subject, “should understand” is the verb, and “the importance of creating respect in the classroom” is the object. (What should teachers understand? The importance of creating respect in the classroom.)

**Run-on Sentences:**

Run-on sentences are two or more complete sentences that do not have proper punctuation between them. Each complete sentence needs to be followed by a sentence break, a semi-colon, or a transition.

Example of a run-on sentence: “Students do exercises every day these will help them stay fit.”

To fix a run-on sentence, there are several options:

- Break up the sentences: Students do exercises every day. These will help them stay fit.
- Add a semi-colon: Students do exercises every day; these will help them stay fit.
- Add a conjunction and a comma: Students do exercises every day, and these will help them stay fit.
- Add a connection such as “which” or “that.”
  - “Which” requires a comma and implies that this information is non-essential. In this case, the second sentence is an add-on that tells the reader about the effects of these exercises. “Students do exercises every day, which will help them stay fit.”
  - “That” does not use a comma and implies that this information is essential, telling what kind of exercises the students are doing. “Students do exercises everyday that will help them stay fit.”