**The DEADLY SINS Checklist**

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**checkmark**[**Sentence Fragments**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/fragments.htm)

A **SENTENCE FRAGMENT** fails to be a sentence in the sense that it cannot stand by itself. It does not contain even one [**independent clause.**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/clauses.htm) There are several reasons why a group of words may seem to act like a sentence but not have the wherewithal to make it as a complete thought.

#**It may locate something in time and place with a prepositional phrase or a series of such phrases, but it's still lacking a proper subject-verb relationship within an independent clause:**

***In Japan, during the last war and just before the armistice.***

#**It describes something, but there is no subject-verb relationship:**

*Working far into the night in an effort to salvage her little boat.*

#**It may have most of the makings of a sentence but still be missing an important part of a verb string:**

*Some of the students working in Professor Espinoza's laboratory last semester.*

#**It may even have a subject-verb relationship, but it has been subordinated to another idea by a dependent word and so cannot stand by itself:**

*Even though he had the better arguments and was by far the more powerful speaker.*

**checkmark**[**Run-on (run-together) Sentences**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/runons.htm)

A **RUN-ON SENTENCE** has at least two parts, either one of which can stand by itself (in other words, two independent clauses), but the two parts have been smooshed together instead of being properly connected.

It is important to realize that the length of a sentence really has nothing to do with whether a sentence is a run-on or not; being a run-on is a structural flaw that can plague even a very short sentence:

The sun is high, put on some sunblock.

An extremely long sentence, on the other hand, might be a "run-off-at-the-mouth" sentence, but it can be otherwise sound, structurally.

When two independent clauses are connected by *only* a comma, they constitute a run-on sentence that is called a **comma-splice**. The example just above (about the sunscreen) is a comma-splice. When you use a comma to connect two independent clauses, it must be accompanied by a little conjunction *(and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so).*

The sun is high, so put on some sunscreen.

**checkmarkAgreement Problems:** [**Subject/verb**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sv_agr.htm) **—** [**Pronoun/antecedent**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/pronouns.htm)

*Basic Principle: Singular subjects need singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs.*

My **brother is** a nutritionist. My **sisters are** mathematicians.

* The indefinite pronouns *anyone, everyone, someone, no one, nobody* are always singular and, therefore, require singular verbs.

Everyone **has** done his or her homework.

Somebody **has left** her purse.

* Some indefinite pronouns — such as *all, some* — are singular or plural depending on what they're referring to. (Is the thing referred to countable or not?) Be careful choosing a verb to accompany such pronouns.

Some of the beads **are** missing.

Some of the water **is** gone.

* Phrases such as *together with, as well as*, and *along with* are not the same as *and*. The phrase introduced by *as well as* or *along with* will modify the earlier word (*mayor* in this case), but it does not compound the subjects (as the word *and* would do).

The mayor as well as his brothers **is** going to prison.

The mayor and his brothers **are** going to jail.

* The pronouns *neither* and *either* are singular and require singular verbs even though they seem to be referring, in a sense, to two things.

Neither of the two traffic lights **is** working.

Which shirt do you want for Christmas?  
Either **is** fine with me.

* The conjunction *or* does not conjoin (as *and* does): when *nor* or *or* is used the subject closer to the verb determines the number of the verb. Whether the subject comes before or after the verb doesn't matter; the proximity determines the number.

Either my father or my brothers **are** going to sell the house.

Neither my brothers nor my father **is** going to sell the house.

**Are** either my brothers or my father responsible?

**Is** either my father or my brothers responsible?

Because a sentence like "Neither my brothers nor my father is going to sell the house" sounds peculiar, it is probably a good idea to put the plural subject closer to the verb whenever that is possible.

* The words *there* and *here* are never subjects.

There **are** two reasons [plural subject] for this.

There **is** no reason for this.

Here **are** two apples.

**checkmarkConsistency Problems:** [**Pronouns**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/consistency.htm) **—** [**Verb tense**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/consistency.htm)

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| In Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, we find the narrator to be one of the few successful characters in terms of moral development. However, even the narrator, you soon realize, is seriously flawed. [We've shifted from the first-person plural "we" (quite common when writing about literature) to the second-person, singular "you."] |
| **Repair Work** Repairs | In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, we find the narrator to be one of the few successful characters in terms of moral development. However, even the narrator, we soon realize, is seriously flawed. |
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| In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the narrator is one of the few truly successful characters in terms of moral development. However, she was also seriously flawed in some ways. |
| **Repair Work** Repairs | In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the narrator is one of the few truly successful characters in terms of moral development. However, she is also seriously flawed in some ways. |
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**checkmark**[**Faulty Parallelism**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/parallelism.htm)

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| **Faulty Parallelism** | **Corrected Version** |
| The French, the Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese | The French, the Italians, the Spanish, and the Portuguese |
| In spring, summer, or in winter | In spring, summer, or winter (In spring, in summer, or in winter) |

**Correlative expressions** (both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third; and the like) should be followed by the same grammatical construction. Many violations of this rule can be corrected by rearranging the sentence.

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| **Faulty Parallelism** | **Corrected Version** |
| It was both a long ceremony and very tedious. | The ceremony was both long and tedious. |
| A time not for words, but action | A time not for words, but for action |
| Either you must grant his request or incur his ill will. | You must either grant his request or incur his ill will. |
| My objections are, first, the injustice of the measure; second, that it is unconstitutional. | My objections are, first, that the measure is unjust; second, that it is unconstitutional. |

When **making comparisons**, the things you compare should be couched in parallel structures whenever that is possible and appropriate.

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| **Faulty Parallelism** | **Corrected Version** |
| My income is smaller than my wife. | My income is smaller than my wife's. |