Recognizing Fragments

**Step One** - Locate the *verb* to see if it is a complete verb:

   a) See if it is a *participle*. A participle is the *verb stem + ing* and is incomplete without a helping verb.

     Fragment - The boy running down the street.
     Sentence - The boy is running down the street.

   b) See if the verb is an *infinitive*. An infinitive is *to + the verb stem* and cannot be the complete verb of a sentence.

     Fragment - The boy to run down the street.
     Sentence - The boy likes to run down the street.

**Step Two** - Make sure there is a *subject*. Ask who or what for the verb; the answer is the subject. For example, who likes to run? *Boy* then is the subject.

**Step Three** - See if the *clause* is dependent or independent.

   a) If it begins with a *subordinate conjunction* (if, when, although, because, etc.), the clause is dependent and must be followed by an independent clause.

     Fragment - If he leaves the party.
     Sentence - If he leaves the party, I will follow.

   b) Make sure the clause is not a *relative clause*. A relative clause begins with *who, which or that*. There must be main verb outside the clause, or it will be a fragment.

     Fragment - The boy who is standing.
     Sentence - The boy who is standing is Frank.

If you have a complete verb (step one) and a subject (step two) and the clause is not a dependent clause (step three), you have a sentence.