

HISTORIAN'S TOOLBOX

Complete, Incomplete, and Run-On Sentences

A complete sentence must have:

- a subject
- a predicate (verb)
- a complete thought
- end punctuation, or correct transitioning into next thought in the sentence

Common errors with incomplete sentences:

Anything that begins with “Yes, because...” or “No, because...” is incomplete. (What are you saying yes or no to?) Replace yes/no with your full answer: We cannot go swimming today because there is a storm coming soon.

Incomplete sentences are often written due to a dependent clause (incomplete thought) not being linked to an independent clause (complete thought/simple sentence):

- Because I want to travel to Europe. (What happened because you want to travel to Europe?)

Ways to connect a dependent clause to an independent clause:

- Add a comma, then the independent clause: Because I want to travel to Europe, I saved up money.
- OR add the independent clause before the dependent clause, without including a comma: I saved up money because I want to travel to Europe.

Examples of subordinating conjunctions that may begin a dependent clause:

after	because	since	until
although	before	that	when
as	if	unless	while

Common errors with run-on sentences:

Run-on sentences are often written due to a comma being used without a coordinating conjunction, or without other forms of correct punctuation/transitions.

- I love to read fantasy series, my favorite is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Ways to correct a run-on sentence:

- Use a comma **and** a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS): I love to read fantasy series, and my favorite is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.
- Use a period: I love to read fantasy series. My favorite is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.
- Use a semi-colon: I love to read fantasy series; my favorite is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.
- Use a semicolon, a transition, then a comma: I love to read fantasy series; in fact, my favorite is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Examples of transitions to use after a semicolon:

after all	for instance	in conclusion	in other words
as a result	however	in contrast	on the other hand
for example	in addition	in fact	therefore