



# SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

A sentence fragment is a piece of information that is punctuated as a sentence but that lacks some of the characteristics of a complete sentence.

## 1. Complete sentences

A sentence must contain both a **subject** and a **verb**. The subject identifies who or what is performing an action and the verb identifies the action being performed. A complete sentence may contain additional information or details in the main part of the sentence (the **independent clause**, which can stand “independently,” or by itself) or in a supplemental part (the **dependent clause**, which “depends” on another part of the sentence for its meaning and cannot stand alone). Sentences can vary in length from a few words to many lines of text, so length is not a reliable indicator of a complete sentence.

*Examples*

**I am.** *This sentence contains a subject (I) and a verb (am).*

**Music and art inspire and educate.** *This sentence contains a compound subject (music and art) and two verbs (inspire and educate).*

**The large house, which was believed to be haunted, had been abandoned for many years.** *This sentence contains a subject (the large house) and a verb (had been). It also contains a dependent clause (which was believed to be haunted) that describes the subject but which cannot stand by itself.*

\*\*\* Note: imperative statements are complete sentences with implied subjects. For example, in the sentence “Do your homework.” the subject “you” is implied.

## 2. Sentence fragments

Sentence fragments occur when phrases are punctuated as sentences even though they are not actually sentences. Often we write them when we feel we have finished expressing a thought, and then decide to add to it - but add to it wrongly. There are three types of errors which produce sentence fragments:

1) No subject

*Example* I am tired of having to remind her to do things. **Tired of having to ask her to help.**

*The statement in bold does not have a subject; we do not know **who** is tired of having to ask her to help.*



## 2) No verb

*Example* On that warm summer evening there were parents out walking with their children. **People playing baseball at the park.**

*Here, the statement in bold does not contain a verb. Looked at by itself, we do not know what is being **said** about the people playing baseball at the park.*

\*\*\* Note: Verbals, such as infinitives (the “to” form, i.e. “to play”) and past participles and present participles (words ending in “ing” or “ed,” like “playing,” above), **appear** to be verbs but do not function as verbs within a sentence.

## 3) A dependent clause without an independent clause

*Example* I was late for class and missed the exam. **Because the bus was slow.**

*The bold phrase is a dependent clause; it provides additional information about the independent clause. If we look at this statement by itself, there is no independent clause so we do not know the significance of the slow bus.*

\*\*\* Note: A dependent clause, while it may contain a subject and a verb, can be identified by a **cue word**, usually a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun. The following table provides examples of cue words.

### Common Subordinating Words

when	if	as if	in order that
before	because	as soon as	provided that
after	although	as long as	since
as	unless	even if	so that
while	whereas	even though	though

## 3. Identifying sentence fragments

Sentence fragments can be identified by using one of the following tests:

- 1) Turn the statement into a true or false question by adding “wasn’t it?” or “didn’t it?” at the end. Then ask yourself, “can I answer this question?”
- 2) Ask yourself whether the statement would convey a complete thought by itself, without the sentences surrounding it.



### Examples

#### **The cold weather.**

Test #1) The cold weather, didn't it? *We cannot answer. What did the cold weather do?*

Test #2) Does this statement convey complete information? *No, we still don't know anything about the cold weather. This sentence is lacking a verb.*

#### **The cold weather delayed the game.**

Test #1) The cold weather delayed the game, didn't it? *Yes, it did.*

Test #2) Does this statement convey complete information? *Yes, we know that the cold weather did something after reading the sentence; therefore, it is a complete sentence.*

#### **Because the cold weather delayed the game.**

Test #1) Because the cold weather delayed the game, didn't it? *We cannot answer. What happened because of the game delay?*

Test #2) Does this statement convey complete information? *No. Since the phrase begins with "because," we expect some further piece of information to be related to the weather and the delayed game. This statement is a dependent clause. It depends for its meaning on information we haven't seen. And note, it begins with one the "cue words" listed on this page.*

#### **We were late for dinner because the cold weather delayed the game.**

Test #1) We were late because the cold weather delayed the game, weren't we? *Yes, we were.*

Test #2) Does this statement convey complete information by itself? *Yes, we can identify the consequences of the delayed game; it caused us to be late for dinner.*

## **4. Exceptions to the rules**

Sentence fragments are acceptable in some types of writing, for stylistic or emphatic purposes. They are used in creative writing, poetry, advertising and journalism.

### Examples

**"Accept everything about yourself - I mean everything. You are you and that is the beginning and the end. No apologies. No regrets."** Clark Moustakas

**"When you care enough to send the very best."** Hallmark slogan

**"Because I'm worth it."** L'Oréal cosmetics slogan



## 5. Correcting sentence fragments

Sentence fragment errors can be corrected in the following ways:

- 1) If there is not a subject, add one.
- 2) If there is not a verb, add one.
- 3) If there is a dependent clause without an independent clause, either
  - a) add an independent clause, or
  - b) join the dependent clause to an existing independent clause,
 or
  - c) remove the subordinating word or words, or
  - d) revise the dependent clause to form an independent clause.

**6. Sentence fragments exercise** - Find and correct the errors in these paragraphs.

### *Example 1*

The study of French requires patience. Because the grammar rules are different from those of the English language. This should not discourage you from learning a new language. It important to be able to communicate with people from other countries. In fact, in Canada, it is doubly important to learn French. So, you will be better able to communicate with your fellow citizens. Which include getting a job and being able to travel. For these reasons encourage you to accept the challenge and learn French.

### *A corrected version*

The study of French requires patience *because*<sup>1</sup> the grammar rules are different from those of the English language. This should not discourage you from learning a new language. It *is*<sup>2</sup> important to be able to communicate with people from other countries. In fact, in Canada it is doubly important to learn French. *You*<sup>3</sup> will be able to better communicate with your fellow citizens. *There are many other benefits of studying French which*<sup>4</sup> include getting a job and being able to travel. For these reasons *I*<sup>5</sup> encourage you to accept the challenge and learn French.

- (1) The dependent clause is joined to the preceding independent clause.
- (2) The verb “to be” is inserted.
- (3) The subordinating word is removed to change a dependent clause to an independent clause.
- (4) An independent clause is inserted and joined to a dependent clause.
- (5) The subject “I” is inserted.



### Example 2

I prefer living in smaller communities. While they may not offer all the services of larger cities. They are advantageous in many ways. Less pollution, less noise and fewer people. Knowing your neighbours is another advantage. Being part of a community. Having a feeling of belonging is rare in high-rise apartments. Because they are overcrowded and poorly designed. Perhaps living away from the city means fewer choices for entertainment, shopping and excitement, but means more time for family and friends.

### A corrected version

I prefer living in smaller communities. While they may not offer all the services of larger cities, *they*<sup>1</sup> are advantageous in many ways. Less pollution, less noise and fewer people *are among the benefits of small town living*<sup>2</sup>. Knowing your neighbours *and being part of a community are other advantages*<sup>3</sup>. Having a feeling of belonging is rare in high-rise apartments. *Their poor design and overcrowded population add to the feeling of isolation*<sup>4</sup>. Perhaps living away from the city means fewer choices for entertainment, shopping and excitement, but *this sacrifice*<sup>5</sup> means more time for family and friends.

(1) The dependent clause was joined to the next independent clause.

(2) An explanation of the significance of these three phenomenon was added to them, turning the construction from a mere list into a complete thought.

(3) A sentence and a sentence fragment were combined to form a new sentence.

(4) The dependent clause (*because they are overcrowded and poorly designed*) was rewritten to form an independent clause. As an alternative correction, it could have been joined to the preceding independent clause.

(5) A subject for the verb “means” was added to the sentence.



### **For further practice, try these on your own!**

#### *Example 3*

When preparing a meal, you should pay special attention to proper food handling techniques. Following these guidelines. Which can help to keep you and your family, safe and healthy. First, you should wash your hands. Before handling any food. You should also ensure that dishes, utensils and work surfaces are clean. Next, food needs to be stored in the refrigerator until it is used. In addition, all fruits and vegetables must be washed thoroughly. Because there could be chemicals or bacteria on their peel. When cooking with meat, ensure it fully cooked. Fully cooked before serving so any bacteria are killed by the heat. Finally, you serve food on clean dishes, not those which previous held raw meat or unwashed produce. This may appear to be time-consuming work. But it can save your life.

#### *Example 4*

I often wonder. While looking out my window. How far do birds travel to land here? And sit in the tree by my house. And then, I think about the power it takes to fly an airplane. And see how small the birds are. They must be very well adapted to survive their yearly migrations. As they travel north and south with the changing seasons. If I was a bird. I might choose to stay in warmer climates all year. Instead of flying north. Where it is colder. That is definitely what I would do. If given a choice. I can only imagine the adventures my flying friends have experienced. Traveling much further than I have. Maybe than I ever will. Must finish my physics homework. So I can someday to learn fly. An airplane to these far off places.



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for **EXERCISE 1** page 276**PRACTICE A, WORKSHEET 1**

# Identifying Sentence Fragments

**DIRECTIONS** Determine which of the following word groups are sentence fragments and which are complete sentences.

- If the group of words is a complete sentence, write *S*.
- If the group of words is a fragment, write *F*.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. If your parents think today's fashions are weird.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. They should see the clothes people wore in the Middle Ages.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Patterns of floral or geometric shapes popular.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Liked clothes that were half one color and half another.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Might have one green leg and one red leg.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. People often heavy leather belts decorated with metal and jewels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Edges of clothing into shapes called dagges.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Sleeves with streamers that were two or three feet long.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Shoes had long toes that were padded to retain their shape.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Tights of velvet or silk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. When clothes were edged and lined in fur.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Layers very common in medieval clothing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Was a way of displaying wealth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The more clothes a person could afford to wear, the wealthier that person was.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Might wear a short-sleeved tunic over a long-sleeved tunic, with a sleeveless mantle over all.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. The usual head covering for men a hood with an attached shoulder cape and a long, extended point, like a tail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Women wore a neckcloth pinned to their braids, hiding their hair.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. On top of the head, would wear a veil, a linen crown, or a small, round hat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. In the later Middle Ages, women wore jeweled metal nets over their coiled braids.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Current fashions a little boring in comparison.





# Identifying Sentence Fragments

**DIRECTIONS** Determine which of the following word groups are sentence fragments and which are complete sentences.

- If the group of words is a complete sentence, write *S*.
- If the group of words is a fragment, write *F*.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Antarctica has the highest average elevation of the seven continents.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. No native people on Antarctica.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Because it is too cold.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Although scientists and other workers live in Antarctica for about a year at a time.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 5. These people there to study many things.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Examine the ozone layer, sleep patterns, and fish survival in subzero temperatures.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Ninety-five percent of Antarctica covered with ice.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Antarctica approximately 70 percent of the world's fresh water in its ice.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Even though Antarctica is covered in ice and snow, it can be considered a desert.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A desert an area that gets very little precipitation.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Antarctica receives only two inches of rain each year.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Also has very high winds.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Sometimes winds as high as 200 miles per hour.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Many animals in the ocean around Antarctica.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Include whales and seals.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 16. One type of bird found on Antarctica is the penguin.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Antarctica so isolated that its snow and ice are very pure.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 18. The continent is far away from pollution.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 19. A mountain range across the continent.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Antarctica's Mount Erebus an active volcano.





# Identifying and Revising Run-on Sentences

**DIRECTIONS** Decide which of the following groups of words are run-on sentences.

- If the group of words is correct, write *C*; if it is a run-on, write *R*.
- Revise each run-on sentence by (1) making it two separate sentences or (2) using a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

**EXAMPLE** R Albert Einstein was one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth

century. <sup>so</sup> he changed the way people view the universe.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. School in Munich was too rigid and boring for young Einstein he did not do well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. However, young Einstein showed a talent for mathematics, at the age of 12,  
he taught himself Euclidean geometry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. After finishing secondary school, he entered the Federal Polytechnic Academy  
in Switzerland, he did not like the teaching methods there.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The academy frustrated him he could learn in a way that interested him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Einstein chose to educate himself, he missed classes often and spent the time studying  
physics on his own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. His professors had low opinions of him, he graduated anyway in 1900.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. In 1905, he published a paper on physics the University of Zürich awarded him a Ph.D.  
for this work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In the same year, he published four more papers that presented new thoughts on the  
nature of light and other important concepts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Physicists resisted his ideas at first, eventually his general theory of relativity was  
confirmed through observation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Einstein achieved international recognition, in 1921 he received the Nobel Prize  
in physics.



## Homework

for EXERCISE 3 pages 278-279

PRACTICE A, WORKSHEET 5

# Identifying and Revising Run-on Sentences

**DIRECTIONS** Decide which of the following groups of words are run-on sentences.

- If the group of words is correct, write *C*; if it is a run-on, write *R*.
- Revise each run-on sentence by (1) making it two separate sentences or (2) using a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

**EXAMPLE** R Bears can live in many different habitats <sup>so</sup> they occupy mountains, forests, and arctic wilderness.

1. Brown bears include the grizzly and the kodiak, the largest brown bear is the kodiak.
2. Kodiak bears weigh as much as 1,700 pounds, they grow to a height of ten feet.
3. Bears can live more than 30 years in the wild.
4. Bears' sense of smell is more developed than their hearing or sight.
5. Females give birth to as many as four cubs, the cubs stay with their mother two or three years.
6. Many people are afraid of bears, encounters with bears are actually infrequent.
7. Grizzly bears are solitary animals, they do not want to interact with people.
8. Generally, bears attack only when they are surprised, or when they are protecting their young.
9. People should always store food and garbage properly, bears could be attracted by the smell.
10. Never try to outrun a bear, it can run more than 30 miles per hour.

## Revising Fragments and Run-ons

**DIRECTIONS** The following paragraph is confusing because it contains some sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

- Identify the fragments by underlining them once.
- Identify the run-ons by underlining them twice.
- Rewrite the paragraph, revising each fragment and run-on to make the meaning clear.

Scuba diving is a popular pastime. *Scuba* is an acronym it stands for “self-contained underwater breathing apparatus.” In the fifteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci designed an underwater diving suit. Functional equipment not developed until much later. The eighteenth century brought practical devices for breathing under water. Such as diving suits and diving bells. Wearing these suits, divers could breathe under water, their mobility was limited. The twentieth century had Jacques Cousteau and Émile Gagnan to solve the problem. Perfected the aqualung. The aqualung is a cylinder of compressed air, it is worn on the back and connected to a mouthpiece. With an aqualung, divers have both air and mobility. Since 71 percent of the earth’s surface is covered by oceans. Scuba diving opened up a whole new world.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery.



- Identify the fragments by underlining them once.
- Identify the run-ons by underlining them twice.
- Rewrite the paragraph, revising each fragment and run-on to make the meaning clear.

Although penguins look clumsy on land. They are graceful in the water. Their bodies are perfectly suited for swimming and diving. They a stream-lined torpedo shape. Their wings are shaped like flippers penguins use them to propel themselves through the water at speeds up to 30 miles per hour. Use their webbed feet to steer. Most penguins can even swim like porpoises. Leaping out of the water to breathe and then diving back in with one graceful motion. Penguins frequently need to dive deep to catch prey. Sometimes descending to depths of over a thousand feet. The water pressure can be great enough to collapse lungs. Penguins special air chambers in their bodies. When a penguin dives, the chambers squeeze, air is forced into the lungs. The extra air keeps the lungs from collapsing. The chilly waters that penguins prefer would be too cold for most birds, penguins are insulated by waterproof feathers and a thick layer of fat. Penguins more than make up for being awkward on land. By being perfectly suited for the water.

[illegible]



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson  
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## Fragments and Run-Ons

*Teaching*

Sentence fragments and run-on sentences are writing errors that can make your writing difficult to understand.

A **sentence fragment** is part of a sentence that is written as if it were a complete sentence. A sentence fragment is missing a subject, a predicate, or both.

**Fragments** The Maya, a Native American people. (missing a predicate)  
 Developed a magnificent civilization. (missing a subject)  
 In southern Mexico and Central America. (missing both)

**Revision** The Maya, a Native American people, developed a magnificent civilization in southern Mexico and Central America.

A **run-on sentence** is two or more sentences written as if they were a single sentence. When you combine two sentences with a conjunction, use a comma before the conjunction.

**Run-on** The Maya lived in Central America their descendants still live there.  
**Revision** The Maya lived in Central America, and their descendants still live there.

### Identifying Sentences, Sentence Fragments, and Run-Ons

On the line to the right of each word group below, write **CS**, **F**, or **RO** to identify the word group as a complete sentence, a fragment, or a run-on sentence.

1. Existed as long ago as B.C. 2000.
2. The Maya created hundreds of great cities out of stone.
3. Most of the Maya were farmers they came to the cities to attend festivals.
4. Only priests, nobles, rulers, and officials.
5. The Maya built a network of roads these roads encouraged trade between groups of people throughout Central America.
6. In the tropical rain forests of northern Guatemala.
7. They were very advanced in science, mathematics, and art.
8. The Maya had a game that resembled basketball the players hit a rubber ball through a hoop with their elbows and hips.
9. Used astronomy to develop a calendar.
10. A Mayan calendar had 365 days.
11. The Maya had no overall ruler or government every city was independent.
12. Why the Mayan civilization collapsed.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson  
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## Fragments and Run-Ons

*More Practice*

### A. Identifying and Correcting Fragments and Run-Ons

On the line after each word group below, write **CS**, **F**, or **RO** to identify the word group as a complete sentence, a fragment, or a run-on sentence. Then rewrite each fragment or run-on as one or more correct sentences. Add sentence parts as needed.

1. It's cold today remember to bring your jacket. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Down the street. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Cary is a drummer in a band. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The play begins at 2:00 we had better hurry. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Hundreds of people in the stands. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### B. Correcting Fragments and Run-ons

Rewrite this paragraph, correcting each fragment and run-on. You may add words to any fragment to make it a sentence or combine it with another sentence. To correct a run-on, you may either separate the sentences or join them correctly.

The Aztecs ruled a mighty empire in Mexico. During the 1400s and 1500s. Aztecs had an advanced civilization they built cities as big as any in Europe. The Aztecs built a huge city. On an island in a lake. A population of one hundred thousand people. Conquered other cities in Mexico. The conquered people sent food as a tribute they also provided gold and silver.

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## Homework

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson  
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# Fragments and Run-Ons

## Application

### A. Proofreading for Fragments and Run-Ons

Rewrite this paragraph, correcting each fragment and run-on. You may add words to any fragment to make it a sentence, or combine it with another sentence. To correct a run-on, you may either separate the sentences or join them correctly.

The main food of the Aztecs. A thin cornmeal pancake called a *tlaxcalli*. In Spanish, this food is called a *tortilla* the Aztecs wrapped these pancakes around meat and vegetables to make *tacos*. Created a drink made with chocolate. This was one of their favorite drinks only the wealthy could afford it often. These foods, developed by the Aztecs. Have become popular all over the world.

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### B. Recognizing and Revising Fragments and Run-ons

Read these notes one student wrote to use in a report. First figure out what the writer was going to say, and then use the information to write a paragraph. Use complete sentences instead of fragments and run-on sentences. Add any words that you need to make the paragraph understandable. Use a separate piece of paper, if necessary.

Braille. A code of small raised dots on paper that can be read by touch. Louis Braille, a 15-year-old French student. At the National Institute for the Blind in Paris. Developed this raised dot system in 1824. Braille worked out an alphabet and numerals using this system he even figured out how to use the raised dots to write music. Read this system by running their fingers over the dots. Each Braille page has words written on both sides of the paper, dots on one side do not interfere with the dots printed on the other side. This system of writing for the blind. Named after Louis Braille.

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## Homework

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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for CHAPTER 26: CORRECTING COMMON ERRORS pages 269–71

## Sentence Fragments and Run-on Sentences A

**EXERCISE** On the line provided, identify the following word groups by writing *SF* for *sentence fragment*, *RO* for *run-on sentence*, or *S* for *sentence*.

- Example** SF 1. Buying school supplies at the office supply store.
- RO 2. I chose self-stick flags and notes in different colors, I use these when I study.
- S 3. Have you ever marked pages in your books with reusable sticker flags?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Available in different colors, such as red, yellow, green, blue, and purple.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. At my school, we cannot write or highlight in our textbooks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I use small sticker flags to mark important passages I write notes on larger self-stick slips of paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A color-coded system for marking different types of information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Occasionally a teacher will say, "This will be on the test."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Marking the page with a red sticker immediately.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Red stickers are for high-priority passages, and yellow stickers are for low-priority passages.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Green is the color of growth I use green flags for difficult topics requiring extra study.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. As a reminder of my own possible intellectual growth in this topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Blue, the color of smooth sailing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Important information is not always difficult to understand I mark this type of passage with a blue flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Education, above all, should be challenging and inspiring.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Always looking for interesting or fascinating topics and ideas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The purple flags for these creative topics.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. For example, after reading a brief reference to ostrich farms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I marked the reference with a purple flag that weekend I investigated ostrich farms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Free access to the Internet at the public library near my apartment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. The Internet has become a useful tool for my research, I find information for tests and papers as well as information for my personal interest and enjoyment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. The three-inch-square, yellow self-stick notes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. On these, I write short notes about my teacher's comments.