

Spilling the tea on sentence fragments

Written by 'Grammar Guy' By Curtis Honeycutt Guest Columnist
Friday, 04 August 2023 05:07



Blame it all on my British roots, but I've never preferred coffee. I like hanging out in coffee shops. I don't mind smelling like I've hung out in a coffee shop all day. But, for me, I like tea.

Every morning I need my Barry's Irish Breakfast Tea with a dash of milk and sugar. Without this, I will be a Grumpy Gus. Don't give me Lipton or Twining's — these are not the same.

In case you were wondering: yes, I do bring my preferred tea with me when I go out of town. And — while I like a good morning cuppa — I've never understood kombucha tea.

What is kombucha, anyway? I know you were already thinking about it. Kombucha sounds like either someone sneezing or the thing someone says after someone sneezes.

Kombucha is like the kale of liquids. Does anyone really enjoy it? If you take a swig of this fermented swill, you'll get a mouthful of vinegary, yeasty tea fungus.

I guess I don't like my teas fermented in the same way I don't like my sentences fragmented. Or do I?

The grammar gods strongly advise against writing sentences in fragments. "Sentence

Spilling the tea on sentence fragments

Written by 'Grammar Guy' By Curtis Honeycutt Guest Columnist
Friday, 04 August 2023 05:07

fragments” is industry-speak for “incomplete sentences.” A complete sentence includes a verb, makes sense on its own, and communicates a complete idea. After all, writing is all about communication.

Here’s an example of a sentence fragment: Because he lives near the ocean.

If the sentence read, “He lives near the ocean,” we’d be in good shape. However, adding “Because” to the beginning makes this fragment a dependent clause. We need the “why” to follow the “because.” Let’s finish that sentence:

Because he lives near the ocean, he collects shells that look like Cher.

That’s completely strange; it’s also a complete sentence.

We speak in fragments. Constantly. We use them either to express a casual style, to create rhythm in our writing or to emphasize a point. I agree with Bobby Graves, though: you’ve got to know the rules before you break them. Seriously.

While grammar purists will beg to differ, I will throw them this bone: avoid using sentence fragments in formal writing. If you’re writing your doctoral dissertation, stay away from sentence fragments. However, when you are writing in a conversational, informal forum, feel free to play with the rules.

Just as some people like their tea slightly fermented, some people like their sentences lightly fragmented. It adds an interesting flavor to an otherwise conventional cup of language libation. While I don’t prefer kombucha, I don’t have a problem with those who fancy effervescent fungus water.

—Curtis Honeycutt is an award-winning syndicated humor columnist. Connect with him on Twitter ([@curtishoneycutt](https://twitter.com/curtishoneycutt)) or at [curtishoneycutt.com](https://www.curtishoneycutt.com) .

Spilling the tea on sentence fragments

Written by 'Grammar Guy' By Curtis Honeycutt Guest Columnist
Friday, 04 August 2023 05:07

'Grammar Guy'

By Curtis Honeycutt
Guest Columnist