A phrase is a group of words that does not contain a verb and its subject. Therefore, a phrase cannot be a complete sentence by itself. It can only be part of a sentence. A prepositional phrase (preposition + noun) is usually easy to spot.

**FRAGMENTS**  
In their driveway. Stands a brand new station wagon.

**SENTENCE**  
In their driveway stands a brand new station wagon.

A verbal phrase may be harder to spot as a fragment, especially verbals that end in -ing. No word ending in -ing can be a verb by itself unless it is a one-syllable word like sing, ring, or bring. If an -ing word is preceded by is, are, or some other form of be, the two words together are a verb.

**PARTICIPE**  
looking, running  
**COMPLETE VERB**  
is looking, was running

Do not mistake an infinitive phrase (to + verb) for a sentence.

**INCORRECT**  
My suit is at the dry cleaner’s. To be pressed.

**CORRECT**  
My suit is at the dry cleaner’s to be pressed.

An appositive phrase may seem like a sentence, but it always lacks a verb.

**APPOSITIVE FRAGMENT**  
Her new dress, beautiful Irish linen.

**SENTENCE**  
Her new dress was made of beautiful Irish linen.

**Completing Fragments.** Rewrite each group of words to form a complete sentence.

1. Running down the street.____________________________________________________

2. I know the best thing to do. To present our case before the governor. _________________

3. We went to the hardware store. To buy some nails. _______________________________

4. Sally found her necklace. In the desk drawer. ____________________________________

5. Our dog, a ten-year-old cocker spaniel. _________________________________________

6. John, cutting the grass in the front yard. ________________________________________

7. Reading quietly. Mother didn’t hear us come in. __________________________________

8. That book on how to grow plants indoors.________________________________________
Note: Answers may vary.

1. Running down the street. *They were running down the street.*

2. I know the best thing to do. To present our case before the governor. *I know the best thing to do is to present our case before the governor.*

3. We went to the hardware store. To buy some nails. *We went to the hardware store to buy some nails.*

4. Sally found her necklace. In the desk drawer. *Sally found her necklace in the desk drawer.*

5. Our dog, a ten-year-old cocker spaniel. *Our dog is a ten-year-old cocker spaniel.*

6. John, cutting the grass in the front yard. *John is cutting the grass in the front yard.*

7. Reading quietly. Mother didn’t hear us come in. *Reading quietly, mother didn’t hear us come in.*