Effective Sentence Structure

Components of Complete Sentences
In order to avoid writing sentence fragments, you first have to know the components of a complete sentence. A complete sentence has:

A complete predicate; a predicate contains a verb and a statement about the subject.

✓ The Internet offers information on music, movies, and more.
   **Note:** If you have an “ing”-verb in a sentence, it must be preceded by a helping verb in order for the sentence to be complete.

✗ Most subway systems seeing little need to improve their infrastructure.
✓ Most subway systems are seeing little need to improve their infrastructure.

A complete subject; a complete subject identifies what the sentence is about and usually precedes the main verb.

✓ The Internet offers information on music, movies, and more.

A complete sentence does not begin with a subordinating conjunction (e.g. although, whenever, unless, until) or a relative conjunction (e.g. which, who, that) unless it is connected to the main clause.

✗ Until it began snowing on the highway.
✓ Until it began snowing on the highway, she was comfortable with driving.

Practice Examples
The following five examples below each contain a sentence structure error. Read over each sentence and fix each error; also, try to figure out which of the three principles above each of the following examples violates.

1. He received a bank loan. Which provided necessary capital for improvement.

2. Some European nations doing little to improve foreign relations.

3. Having thought about our situation.

4. This is a good arrangement. Whenever you’re taking care of children.

5. John Lennon was killed in 1980. By a deranged young man.