

Part I: Run-On Sentences

Definition: A run-on sentence either has too many independent clauses or two independent clauses that are not linked correctly.

Two types of run-on sentences are *fused sentences* and *comma splices*.

1. Fused Sentence

Definition: A fused sentence consists of two independent clauses, but both the comma and coordinating conjunction are missing.

Example of a Fused Sentence: She writes the music he plays the guitar.

'*She writes the music*' and '*he plays the guitar*' are each independent clauses, containing a subject and a verb and expressing complete thoughts. '*He plays the guitar*' is an independent clause that can stand alone because it expresses a complete thought and is grammatically correct.

he=subject (S)

plays=verb (V)

guitar=direct object (DO)

However, in the above example, the independent clause, '*She writes the music*,' incorrectly runs into a second independent clause, '*he plays the guitar*.'

Strategies for Correcting Fused Sentences:

1. Create a compound sentence.

Inserting a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) plus a comma correctly links these independent clauses. This sentence structure is called a compound sentence.

Correct compound sentence: She writes the music, *and* he plays the guitar.

independent clause + comma + coordinating conjunction + independent clause

2. Separate independent clauses with periods and capitalization, creating simple sentences.

Correct sentences: She writes the music. He plays the guitar.

3. Insert a semi-colon.

Semi-colons should be used sparingly and to connect independent clauses whose meanings are closely related.

Correct sentence: She writes the music for Coldplay; he plays the guitar for that band.

* **Note:** When more details are added to the above independent clauses, the meanings become much more closely related. Thus, a semi-colon can separate these clauses.

4. Link ideas using a subordinate clause (dependent clause).

Correct Sentence:

While she writes the music for Coldplay, he plays the guitar for that band.

subordinate clause + comma + independent clause

'*While*' is a subordinating conjunction, which makes '*while she writes music for Coldplay*,' a dependent clause. That is, the clause *depends* on the rest of the sentence for

the overall meaning to be clear. A dependent clause cannot stand alone. Use a comma to separate a dependent clause that appears *before* an independent clause.

***Note:** A sentence constructed of one independent clause and one or more dependent (or subordinate) clauses is called a complex sentence.

2. Comma Splice

Definition: A comma splice consists of two or more independent clauses that follow one another and are incorrectly linked together only with a comma (or commas). The coordinating conjunction is missing.

Example of a Comma Splice: She writes the music, he plays the guitar.

In the above sentence, a comma separates the two independent clauses, but a coordinating conjunction is also necessary.

Strategies for Correcting Comma Splices:

1. Insert a coordinating conjunction to create a compound sentence.

Correct Sentences:

She writes the music for Coldplay, **but** he plays the guitar for that band.

She writes the music for Coldplay, **and** he plays the guitar for that band.

Remember, the coordinating conjunction appears *after* the comma.

***Note:** Again, consider meaning before joining sentences. If the sentences are not closely connected, it may be best to keep them separate. Think about these two independent clauses:

Today I was late for class.

I will have a burrito for dinner tonight.

Since these ideas are distinct, keep the sentences separate.

2. Insert a semi-colon.

Correct Sentence: She writes the music for Coldplay; he plays the guitar for that band.

Again, to join two independent clauses with a semi-colon, be sure that their meanings are closely connected. The Tutoring Center has a separate handout on semi-colon usage.

*** See pages 4-7 for further explanation of these strategies as well as sample sentences and practice activities.**

Run-On Sentences: Examples and Explanations

Examples:

It was raining Naomi could not find her umbrella. (Fused)

It was raining, Naomi could not find her umbrella. (Comma Splice)

How to fix these run-ons:

Step 1: Identify the independent clauses.

It	was raining	+	Naomi	could not find	her umbrella.
subject + verb phrase			subject + verb phrase		(direct object)

Step 2: Use one of the below strategies.

1. Period + Capital Letter (Separate Sentences)

It was raining. Naomi could not find her umbrella.
S + V. S + V

2. Comma + Coordinating Conjunction (Compound Sentence)

It was raining, and Naomi could not find her umbrella.
S + V , and S + V

3. Semi-Colon

It was raining; Naomi could not find her umbrella.
S + V ; S + V

4. Subordinating Conjunction + Comma (Complex Sentence)

Though it was raining, Naomi could not find her umbrella.
dependent clause , S + V

***Note:** Use the Tutoring Center's Transitions/Grammar Aid Handout to help identify coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Ask a tutor if you are unclear about the meanings of these conjunctions or in which situations to use them.

Practice: Avoiding Run-Ons

Correct the following run-on sentences by using the strategies previously discussed.

1. I moved to the United States when I was young it was easy to learn English, my parents were already here, they knew English already.

2. Juan and David recognized each other they had been in the first grade together.

3. Her car would not start she was late for class.

4. The parents ate the baby slept in her stroller.

5. Eli wants to quit smoking this habit is too expensive.
