

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COMMA SPLICES AND RUN-ONS

A sentence expresses a complete thought. You've seen how fragments can interfere with the meaning of a sentence. Run-on sentences and comma-splices can cause similar problems of unclear meaning.

While a fragment occurs when a sentence is broken apart, a run-on develops when one sentence runs into another one.

This happens in the following way:

You finish one independent clause and go on to write another without putting any punctuation between.

The train stops here it is always late.

A comma splice is when two independent clauses are incorrectly joined with a comma:

You incorrectly put a comma between the two independent clauses.

The train stops here, it is always late.

REMEMBER: An independent clause has a subject and a complete verb, and it does not begin with any of the words that begin a dependent clause.

In the above examples, each of the independent clauses can stand alone as a sentence:

The train stops here. It is always late.

The three exercises that follow will give you practice in recognizing run-ons and

comma-splices.

Writing Center

EXERCISE: RECOGNITION

Each of the following is an example of a run-on or comma-splice sentence. Draw a line between the independent clauses. Cross out incorrect commas.

1. I like rock music I don't like jazz.
2. The invitation was beautiful it was hand-lettered.
3. The pen is out of ink, it needs a refill.
4. Ben is a trucker, he is from Georgia.
5. The movie was long, it lasted three hours.
6. Babies are cute they cry a lot.
7. Thanks for your comment, I do want your help.
8. The trip was postponed we had no sleeping bags.
9. The firemen were called, they handled the blaze.
10. I wrote a report I learned a lot from doing it.

ANOTHER EXERCISE: RECOGNITION

Mark "C" for a complete sentence, "RO" for a run-on sentence, or "C-S" for a comma splice.

- C-S
1. They were neighbors, they were good friends.
 2. I enjoy softball, I'm not too good at it.
 3. Peter is on the team, he doesn't play very often.
 4. A bad grade bothers me, don't think it doesn't.

5. She isn't coming, she has no transportation.
6. Ann has wanted to buy the ring since she saw it in the store window.
7. The boys went fishing the girls went hiking.
8. Football is a great sport you can play in the park.
9. There were two seats left, we took them.
10. Give me a chance I can do better.

A THIRD EXERCISE: RECOGNITION

Mark "C" for a complete sentence, "RO" for a run-on sentence, or "C-S" for a comma splice.

- C-S
1. What should we do, I don't know.
 2. He was a star athlete he won trophies.
 3. We returned the books to the library.
 4. You smoke too much, you'll get sick.
 5. The snowplows came through, they cleared the street.
 6. She entered the marathon she placed third.
 7. The governor made a statement, it was surprising.
 8. He takes drugs, he shouldn't.
 9. She couldn't light the candle the wick was gone.
 10. Brian made a mistake he corrected it later.

Now that you can recognize run-ons and comma-splices, it is important to know how to correct them. There are four ways to correct a run-on sentence or a comma splice. Each method is described in one of the following points.

POINT 1: Connect two independent clauses with a comma plus one of these connecting words: and, but, for, or, nor, yet, so.

Remember, a comma by itself is not sufficient.

Students write papers, and teachers correct them.

This is now a complete and correct sentence. The two independent clauses are connected by a comma and the connecting word and.

The men cooked the dinner, so the women mixed the drinks.

The train stops here, but it is always late.

EXERCISE: POINT 1

Change each of the following run-on or comma-splice sentences into a complete and correct sentence by placing a comma plus a connecting word where necessary. Rewrite the new, correct sentence in the space provided.

1. It was my mother's birthday, I called her on the phone.

(Corrected) It was my mother's birthday, so I called her on the phone.

2. Going out to dinner is fun it is expensive.,

3. She is my roommate we split all the bills.

4. He usually makes his own bed, today he forgot to do it.

5. I want that job, I don't think I have enough experience.

6. We found some shells on the beach they were beautiful.

7. It was good news, it came as a surprise.
8. I will not go, you will not go.
9. Our daughter is in the third grade, she is very bright.
10. I'm not sure I understand it completely I like it.

ANOTHER EXERCISE: POINT 1

Fill in the blanks. What is one way to correct a run-on sentence or comma-splice?

Connect two independent clauses with a comma plus one of these connecting words:

_____ , _____ , _____ ,
_____ , _____ , _____ ,
_____ .

POINT 2: Separate two independent clauses with a semicolon.

Students write papers; teachers correct them.

The semicolon separates the two independent clauses and makes the sentence complete and correct. The independent clauses must be closely related; otherwise, connecting them closely with a semi-colon (;) will not make sense to the reader.

The men cooked dinner; the women mixed the drinks.

The train stops here; it is always late.

In addition, connecting words such as however, therefore, consequently, nevertheless, likewise, besides, also, then, and furthermore may be used after the semicolon.

These words are stronger and more emphatic than the words and, but, and the other words listed in Point 1. Because these are strong words, it is often a good idea to put a comma after them. The word then is an exception; it does not generally take a comma.

Students write papers; then teachers correct them.

The men cooked dinner; therefore, the women mixed the drinks.

The train stops here; however, it is always late.

EXERCISE: POINT 2

Correct each of the following run-on sentences or comma-splices by placing a semicolon between the independent clauses. Add commas where they are needed. Rewrite the complete and correct sentence in the space provided.

1. I received the most votes therefore I was elected.
2. My brother is in the army he is a colonel.
3. I want to visit him however I am not feeling well.
4. The play was a comedy, it was very funny.
5. You want your freedom nevertheless you will have to get a job.
6. I love you furthermore I want to marry you.
7. She must be out of town otherwise she would be here.
8. First we eat dinner, then we have dessert.
9. The suit fit perfectly I bought two different styles.
10. There was no heat consequently we froze all night.

REVIEW EXERCISE: POINTS 1 AND 2

Fill in the blank with either a comma and a connecting word or a semicolon and a connecting word, making the sentence complete and correct. Place a comma after the connecting word if it is needed. Use five of each type.

1. We rented a floor buffer, it did not work.
2. Joe ran all the way home he was tired.
3. I cooked a hamburger for dinner I forgot to buy a roll.
4. The horse I bet on came in second I lost money.
5. The window was shattered we had to get a new one.
6. The candle burned for hours we did not have to use the lamp.
7. Apple pie is delicious it is fattening.
8. The show came on too late she wasn't really interested in seeing it.
9. Summers are hot and humid winters are cold and dry.
10. He was wealthy he could buy anything he wanted.

ANOTHER REVIEW EXERCISE: POINTS 1 AND 2

Fill in the blanks. Tell two ways to correct a run-on sentence or a comma-splice.

1. Connect two _____ clauses with a _____ plus one of these connecting words: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
2. Separate two _____ clauses with a _____.

POINT 3: Make two independent clauses into two sentences by using a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

Students write papers. Teachers correct them.

Since an independent clause is already a sentence, we can easily make the two clauses into two sentences by placing a period between them.

The men cooked dinner. The women mixed the drinks.
The train stops here. However, it is always late.

The strong connecting word however becomes part of the second sentence.

Note how the following run-on sentence can be made into two sentences by inserting a question mark:

Did you go to the party I didn't.

can be changed into:

Did you go to the party? I didn't.

EXERCISE: POINT 3

Make each of the following run-on or comma-splice sentences into two separate sentences. Add correct punctuation and a capital letter.

1. She asked for a raise she got it.
2. I won the contest, first prize was fifty dollars.
3. He is a good father he pays attention to his children.
4. They got a dog at the pound it was a boxer.
5. The typewriter needs to be repaired, a key is stuck.
6. There is no milk left, therefore we will have to go to the store.
7. He failed the test, consequently he will have to take it again.
8. Why did you go partying you were tired.
9. The program was over we turned off the television.
10. Bowling is fun for the whole family, it is good exercise.

REVIEW EXERCISE: POINTS 1-3

Rewrite these run-ons and comma-splices in each of the three ways you know how to correct them.

1. The sun went down, the mosquitoes came out.

(Corrected) The sun went down, and the mosquitoes came out.

The sun went down; the mosquitoes came out.

The sun went down. The mosquitoes came out.

2. Ben ran a good race, he came in second.
3. We applauded the actress she came out for a second bow.
4. We drink tea we never drink coffee.
5. I'm learning how to type it is a very useful skill.
6. Have you read that book, it's very exciting.
7. Are you my friend, are you my enemy?
8. Don't write run-on sentences they are confusing,
9. I have hay fever I take allergy pills.
10. I'm in my second childhood I feel young again.

POINT 4: Change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause.

Remember, when a dependent clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, it is followed by a comma.

When students write papers, teachers correct them.

The addition of the word when makes students write papers a dependent clause. This sentence is now complete and correct.

Before the men cooked dinner, the women mixed drinks.

Though the train stops here, it is always late.

EXERCISE: POINT 4

Each of the following run-on sentences or comma-splices contain two independent clauses. Correct the sentence by making one of them into a dependent clause.

1. We went to the museum, Bob went the ball game.

(corrected) While we went to the museum, Bob went to the ball game.

2. You are my sister I love you.

3. I don't like crowds, I enjoy going to the beach.

4. The temperature dropped it started to rain.

5. You left I can't go on.

6. You are rich I envy you.

7. Let's find our seats, the show begins.

8. He is always late we never invite him.

9. I get my change, I look for a penny.

10. You were gone the plumber came.

REVIEW EXERCISE: POINTS 3 AND 4

All of the following sentences are run-ons or comma-splices. Correct each of them in two ways: (1) separate the independent clauses into two sentences with a period and a capital letter; (2) make one of the clauses into a dependent clause and add any necessary punctuation.

1. We moved here we have been very happy.

We moved here. We have been very happy.

Since we moved here, we have been very happy.

2. Trash is collected on Mondays it is taken to the dump.

3. Gino wants to join the Navy he enjoys travel and adventure.

4. I have a cold I am unable to play this evening.

5. That type of defense will never work the other team is too good.

6. We go swimming every night during the summer the pond is nearby.

7. We drove cross-country we had no idea how beautiful America is.

8. You're here you can wash your clothes.

9. The professor raised his voice he was sure angry.

10. You really are my friend you will come with me.

Writing Center

The Four Ways to Correct a Run-on or Comma-Splice Sentence

1. Connect two independent clauses with a comma plus one of these connecting words: and, but, for, or, nor, yet, so
2. Separate two independent clauses with a semicolon.
3. Make the two independent clauses into two sentences by using a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.
4. Change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause.

CHAPTER REVIEW

- I. Mark "C" for a complete sentence or "RO" for a run-on or "C-S" for a commasplice. Draw a line between the independent clauses in run-ons. Cross out incorrect commas.
 1. Shirts sometimes come with cardboard in them it protects them from wrinkling.
 2. You need matches to start a fire.
 3. We watched the fireworks display, it was thrilling.
 4. Before you paint, you have to strip the surface.
 5. She was hired because she was the best one for the job.
 6. It was our idea it was a hit.
 7. Tony visited his brother he was in Florida.
 8. Rest is important vitamins will help.
 9. Coffee prices are high, many people drink tea.
 10. Max takes flying lessons, he is getting a license.

II. Mark "C" for a complete sentence and "RO" for a run-on or "C-S" for a comma splice. Correct the run-ons by using one of the four points.

1. Guns are dangerous, they can cause a lot of trouble.
2. After the tube blew we called the repairman.
3. *Jaws* was a hit movie, everyone saw it.
4. Construction workers wear hard hats they need protection.
5. The bus is filled we will have to wait for another.
6. Poker is a great game, it takes skill as well as luck.
7. I won't be angry with even though you're always late.
8. Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, and histories.
9. Mr. D'Mambo is an artist, he has his own studio.
10. I need a firmer mattress, I have a bad back.

III. Each of the following sentences can be corrected by adding proper punctuation and sometimes a capital letter. Circle the correction that makes the run-on into a complete and correct sentence.

1. We want to buy a new car (, ;) but it is too expensive.
2. She is a teacher (, ;) therefore (,) she has her summers off.
3. I wrote my congressman (, . H) he replied with a form letter.
4. He started slowly (, . T) then (,) he speeded up and won the race.
5. Al went to the ballgame (, ;) he ate peanuts and drank beer.
6. Italy is a lovely country (, . A) and so is Spain.

7. We had a picnic (, ;) and Marie played the guitar.

8. Although we got lost (, . W) we arrived on time.

9. Young people are often energetic (, ;) furthermore (,) they have great ambition.

10. Since we bought the fan (, ;) it has been much cooler in here.

IV. Each of the following comma-splices can be corrected by the addition of a connecting word. Fill in the blank with an appropriate word.

1. Bring me my slippers, _____ see if you can find my pipe.

2. I've never been there, _____ I don't want to go.

3. I would like to get a bird's-eye view of things, _____ I can't fly.

4. You must do your homework, _____ you'll get a poor grade.

5. I don't usually read that magazine, _____ I did see that article.

6. The movie was hilarious, _____ I saw it twice.

7. I like playing tennis, _____ I'm not very good at it.

8. I take lessons, _____ I practice every day.

9. She wears army boots, _____ she rides a motorcycle.

10. I have hay fever, _____ it only bothers me in August.

V. Make each of the following run-on sentences into a complete and correct the tense Use each of the four ways at least once.

1. You can use a staple gun you can use tacks.
2. Postcards are nice to receive so are letters.
3. Some people say horse races are fixed they are fun to watch.
4. Smoking is dangerous to your health it can cause cancer
5. A fireplace is romantic it can keep you warm.
6. Pancakes are delicious they are easy to make.
7. We took pictures at the beach, they came out beautiful.
8. A vase is very fragile you have to be careful with it.
9. My sign is Libra however my wife is an Aquarian.
10. Writing is an important skill it takes time to develop.

VI. Tell one way to correct a run-on or comma-splice sentence.

Connect two _____ clauses with a comma plus one of these connecting words:

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
_____ / _____

VII. Correct these run-ons or comma-splices in each of the four ways you have learned.

1. Sal loves pizza he eats it every day.

2. I built a desk I keep it in my bedroom.

3. You are my uncle I am your nephew.

4. Science is interesting, so is history.

5. I mixed the ingredients I put the batter in the oven.

6. I beg your pardon it was my fault.

7. Chris likes to cook he made spaghetti today.

8. I enjoyed the dinner, I feel a bit bloated now.

9. Clean your room, you will get in trouble.

10. The wine is imported from France it is very good.