



What's Wrong with This Sentence?

How to Correct Common Sentence Errors

Two of the most common grammar mistakes students often make are run-on sentences and comma splices! Improve your own writing by identifying and fixing these mistakes.

What's a Run-on Sentence?

Run-on Sentences are fused or joined together as if they were only one thought.

Example: Rob exercises everyday he should be in good condition.

Run-on sentences do just what the words say: they "run on," from one independent clause to another, without the necessary punctuation or coordinating conjunction that signals the reader how, or whether, they're related.

What's a Comma Splice?

Comma Splices occur when a comma is used to connect or "splice" together two complete thoughts. A comma alone is NOT ENOUGH to connect two complete sentences.

Example: Rob exercises everyday, he should be in good condition.

Comma splices are two independent clauses that are incorrectly joined by a comma.

Steps to Fixing Run-ons and Comma Splices

Step One

- Find the **subjects and verbs** of the sentence. Identify whether each subject and verb belongs to an independent or a dependent clause.
 - **Dependent clauses** usually explain something about the independent clause. They tell you when, where, why, how the action is happening in a sentence. Dependent clauses cannot stand on their own; they depend on a complete thought. It is not incorrect to begin a sentence with a dependent clause, follow it with a comma, and connect it to an independent clause.
 - Dependent (or subordinate) clause in a correct sentence:
 - Although I have seen every episode of *Futurama*, I still enjoy watching them.
 - An **independent clause** contains a subject/verb pair that makes sense on its own. If there are two *independent* subject/verb pairs in the same sentence, then it is a run on/comma splice.
 - Two independent clauses in a run-on/comma splice sentence:
 - I have seen every episode of *Futurama* at least six times, I still enjoy watching them.

Step Two

- After identifying the independent clauses, draw an imaginary line between them. This line shows you where the two sentences start and end.

I have seen every episode of *Futurama* at least six times, | I still enjoy watching them.
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Step Three

- Fix the run-on/comma splice in one of these ways:
 - **Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction: *and, or, nor, but, for, so, yet*.**
 - I have seen every episode of *Futurama* at least six times, **but** I still enjoy watching them.
 - **Separate the independent clauses with a period or a semicolon.**
 - I have seen every episode of *Futurama* at least six times; I still enjoy watching them.
 - **Connect the independent clauses with a semicolon, a conjunctive adverb, and a comma.**
 - I have seen every episode of *Futurama* at least six times; **however**, I still enjoy watching them.

Remember...

Independent clauses are mini-sentences: they can stand alone as grammatically complete units. If two or more are of them are smuggled into the same sentence with no punctuation between them, they must be broken apart in one of the ways described above.