

: RUN-ONS?

A *run-on* is two complete thoughts that are run together with no adequate sign given to mark the break between them. * Some run-ons have no punctuation at all to mark the break between the thoughts. Such run-ons are known as *fused sentences*: they are fused or joined together as if they were only one thought.

Fused Sentence RO

My grades are very good this semester my social life rates only a C.

Fused Sentence

Our father was a madman in his youth he would do anything on a dare.

In other run-ons, known as *comma splices*, a comma is used to connect or 'splice' together the two complete thoughts. However, a comma alone is *not enough* to connect two complete thoughts. Some stronger connection than a comma alone is needed.

CS

Comma Splice

My grades are very good this semester, my social life rates only a C.

Comma Splice

Our father was a madman in his youth, he would do anything on a dare.

Comma splices are the most common kind of run-on mistake. Students sense that some kind of connection is needed between two thoughts, and so put a comma at the dividing point. But the comma alone is not sufficient, and a stronger, clearer mark between the two thoughts is needed.

#1

One way of correcting a run-on is to use a period and a capital letter at the break between the two complete thoughts. Use this method especially if the thoughts are not closely related or if another method would make the sentence too long.

Activity

Write a second sentence to go with each of the sentences that follow. Start the second sentence with the word shown at the left. Your sentences can be serious or playful.

Example she Jackie works for the phone company. She climbs telephone

poles in all kinds of weather.

1. The alarm clock is unreliable. _____

He 2. My uncle has a peculiar habit. _____

Then 3. Lola studied for the math test for two hours. _____

#2

Another way of correcting a run-on sentence is to use a comma plus a joining word to connect the two complete thoughts. Joining words (also called *conjunctions*) include *and, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet*.

Activity 1

Insert the joining word (*and, but, for, so*) that logically connects the two thoughts in each sentence.

1. The couple wanted desperately to buy the house, _____ they did not qualify for a mortgage.
2. A lot of men today get their hair styled, _____ they use perfume and other cosmetics as well.
3. Clyde asked his wife if she had any bandages, _____ he had just sliced his finger with a paring knife.

#3

A third method of correcting a run-on sentence is to use a semicolon to mark the break between two thoughts. A *semicolon* (;) is made up of a period above a comma and is sometimes called a *strong comma*. The semicolon signals more of a pause than a comma alone but not quite the full pause of a period.

Semicolon Alone: Here are some earlier sentences that were connected with a comma plus a joining word. Notice that a semicolon, unlike the comma alone, can be used to connect the two complete thoughts in each sentence:

A lot of men today get their hair styled; they use perfume and other cosmetics as well.