

Run-on Sentences/Comma Splices

Run-on Sentences

A run-on is two or more complete sentences that have been written as though they are one sentence. Identifying run-on sentences is a bit harder than identifying fragments, because if you read them out loud, they are liable to sound just fine. All the elements are there (actor, action, complete thought), but they are there two or more times. Consider the following example:

I drove to the store Pat walked to the bank.

In the above passage, you will find two actors ("I" and "Pat"), two actions ("drove" and "walked"). Having two actors and two actions, however, doesn't automatically mean you have a run-on sentence. To see if you have a run-on sentence, look and see if there is a place where you could divide the passage into two complete thoughts, without adding, rearranging, or removing any words. If you can, you have a run-on sentence.

In the above example, you could divide the passage into the following:

I drove to the store. Pat walked to the bank.

Without adding, rearranging, or removing any words, you have created two sentences, each with an actor, an action, and the ability to stand alone. Now consider the following examples:

- *She mowed the lawn Phil watered the garden.*
- *She mowed the lawn, and Phil watered the garden.*
- *While she mowed the lawn, Phil watered the garden.*

The first is an example of a run-on sentence. To fix this, you could divide it into two independent clauses.

- *She mowed the lawn.*
- *Phil watered the garden.*

The second is a legitimate sentence. You can't divide it into two independent clauses. The word "and" prevents you from doing this.

- *She mowed the lawn and. Phil watered the garden. (INCORRECT)*
- *She mowed the lawn. And Phil watered the garden. (INCORRECT)*

The third is a legitimate sentence. Again, you can't divide it into two independent clauses. The word "while" prevents you from doing this.

While she mowed the lawn. Phil watered the garden. (INCORRECT)

Comma Splice

A comma splice is exactly like a run-on sentence. The difference is that instead of using no punctuation to divide two complete sentences, the writer uses a comma to divide two complete sentences. Here are some examples of comma splices:

- The dog barked, the cat ran.
- I brought my lunch to work, I'm trying to save money.

In each case, the comma is separating two complete sentences, each with an actor and an action. There are a couple of ways to correct a comma splice. One way is to change the comma to a period or semicolon:

- The dog barked. The cat ran.
- I brought my lunch to work; I'm trying to save money.

Another option is to add a conjunction, creating a compound sentence:

- The dog barked, and the cat ran.
- I brought my lunch to work, because I'm trying to save money.

Links to Additional Information

- "[Comma Splices/Fused Sentences](#)," from Big Dog's Grammar