

Run on Sentences

Run-on sentences are independent clauses that have not been joined correctly. An independent clause is a word group that can stand alone as a sentence. When two independent clauses appear in one sentence, they must be joined in one of these ways:

- with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, or, nor, for, so, yet*)
- with a semicolon (or occasionally with a colon or a dash)

There are **two types of run-on sentences**. When a writer puts no mark of punctuation and no coordinating conjunction between independent clauses, the result is called a *fused sentence*.

Independent Clause

Independent Clause

Fused: *Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

Independent Clause

Independent Clause

Fused: *Gestures are a means of communication for everyone they are essential for the hearing impaired.*

A far more common type of run-on sentences is the *comma splice* – two or more independent clauses joined with a comma but without a coordinating conjunction. In some comma splices, the comma appears alone.

Comma splice: *Air pollution poses risks to all humans, it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

Comma splice: *Gestures are a means of communication, for everyone they are essential for the hearing impaired.*

In other comma splices, the comma is accompanied by a joining word that is not a coordinating conjunction. There are only seven coordinating conjunctions in English: *and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet*. Notice that all of these words are short – only two or three letters long

Comma splice: Air pollution poses risks to all humans, however, it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

Comma splice: Gestures are a means of communication, however, for everyone they are essential for the hearing impaired.

However is a transitional expression, not a coordinating conjunction.

Recognizing run-on sentences

Does the sentence contain two independent clauses (word groups that can be punctuated as sentences)?

NO →

No problem

YES ↓

Are the clauses joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet*)?

YES →

No problem

NO ↓

Are the clauses joined with a semicolon?

YES →

No problem

NO ↓

Revise.
It is a run-on sentence.

If you find an error, choose an effective method of revision.

EXERCISE 20-2 Revise any run-on sentences using a technique that you find effective. If a sentence is correct, write "correct" after it. Example:

Crossing so many time zones on an eight-hour flight, I knew I would be tired when I arrived, ^{but} ~~however~~, I was too excited to sleep on the plane.

- a. Wind power for the home is a supplementary source of energy, it can be combined with electricity, gas, or solar energy.
 - b. Aidan viewed Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* three times and then wrote a paper describing the film as the work of a mysterious modern painter.
 - c. In the Middle Ages, the streets of London were dangerous places, it was safer to travel by boat along the Thames.
 - d. "He's not drunk," I said, "he's in a state of diabetic shock."
 - e. Are you able to endure boredom, isolation, and potential violence, then the army may well be the adventure for you.
1. Death Valley National Monument, located in southern California and Nevada, is one of the hottest places on earth, temperatures there have soared as high as 134 degrees Fahrenheit.
 2. Anamaria opened the boxes crammed with toys, out sprang griffins, dragons, and phoenixes.
 3. Subatomic physics is filled with strange and marvelous particles, tiny bodies of matter that shiver, wobble, pulse, and flatten to no thickness at all.
 4. As his first major project, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed New York City's Central Park, one of the most beautiful urban parks in the United States.
 5. The neurosurgeon explained that the medication could have one side effect, it might cause me to experience temporary memory loss.