

Writing and Communication Center

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Avoiding Run-on Sentences and Comma Splices

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Definitions

Run-on sentences

Also called fused sentences, run-ons consist of two independent clauses (two complete sentences each containing a noun/subject and verb/predicate) joined without conjunctions or punctuation.

Example:

I have two papers due on Monday I am going to study all weekend.

Comma splices

A comma splice is a run-on with a comma added between the two independent clauses. In other words, comma splices occur when two independent clauses are improperly joined—or spliced—with a comma, rather than separated with a period or semi-colon.

Example:

I have two papers due on Monday, I am going to study all weekend.

Punctuation Remedies for Run-on Sentences or Comma Splices

- 1. Use a period to separate independent clauses into two separate sentences.**

Example: I have two papers due on Monday. I am going to study all weekend.

- 2. Use a semicolon to separate the clauses when the relationship between them is obvious, or when one thought naturally follows the other.**
Example: I have two papers due on Monday; I am going to study all weekend.
- 3. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction between the clauses to show that each has equal weight.**
Coordinating conjunctions indicate equally important clauses and consist of the following: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (acronym: FANBOYS).
Example: I have two papers due on Monday, so I am going to study all weekend.
- 4. Use a comma and a subordinating conjunction to subordinate one of the clauses (the comma may be omitted, depending on the length of the subordinated clause).**
Subordinating conjunctions indicate subordinate clauses and include the following: that, when, where, while, whence, because, so that, although, since, as, after, if, until, before.
Example: I am going to study all weekend because I have two papers due on Monday.
- 5. Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb to show the relationship between the clauses. Another comma must follow the conjunctive adverb.**
Conjunctive adverbs show the relationship between clauses and include the following: besides, consequently, furthermore, however, instead, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, still, then, therefore, thus.
Example: I have two papers due on Monday; consequently, I am going to study all weekend.
- 6. Use a comma, a coordinating conjunction, and a conjunctive adverb to show the relationship between the clauses.**
Example: I have two papers due on Monday, and thus, I am going to study all weekend.

Source:

Mulderig, Gerald P. and Langdon Elsbree. *The Heath Handbook*. 12th ed.
Lexington, MA: Heath, 1990.

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