

RUN-ONS AND COMMA SPLICES



Run-on sentences and comma splices are closely related errors. A **run-on sentence** occurs when multiple independent clauses are unpunctuated or lack connections in a single sentence, while a **comma splice** occurs when a comma is used to separate two independent clauses. Both of these kinds of errors detract from the overall clarity of your writing because they create **faulty sentences** that contain **more than one idea**.

Correcting these errors starts with **identifying clauses** within sentences, but it also relies on using **conjunctions** and/or **punctuation** that accurately reflect the relationship between the information you are presenting.



Comma Splices Explained

A comma splice occurs when **two independent clauses** (complete sentences) are joined with a **comma**, as in the following sentence:

e.g., I am drinking a lot of coffee today ¹, I was up too late last night ².

- 1 First independent clause
- 2 Second independent clause

While the ideas in the above sentence are somewhat connected in content, each clause is actually independent. It is a comma splice.

Fixing Comma Splices

There are a few ways to resolve comma splices when they occur. Using the above example, we can fix the error by:

1 Replacing the comma with terminal punctuation

Because the clauses on either side of a comma splice are independent, the error can be fixed by replacing the comma with a **period** or a **semicolon**.

e.g., I am drinking a lot of coffee today. I was up too late last night.
e.g., I am drinking a lot of coffee today; I was up too late last night.

In some cases, to provide the above solutions with stronger flow and connection, you can add a **transition word** or **phrase** (with a **comma**) to the **second clause**:

*e.g., She drank her tea too quickly; **as a result**, she burned the roof of her mouth.*



2 Leaving the comma in but adding a coordinating conjunction

Commas can be used between two independent clauses when the clauses are joined by a **coordinating conjunction**:

*e.g., I am drinking a lot of coffee, **for** I was up too late last night.*



Use the acronym F.A.N.B.O.Y.S. to identify conjunctions that you can use to eliminate comma splice errors:

F (for)

A (and)

N (nor)

B (but)

O (or)

Y (yet)

S (so)

Run-on Sentences Explained

Run-on sentences occur when **two or more independent clauses** are joined together **without any punctuation or conjunction**, as in the following sentence:

e.g., The results were tabulated¹ they turned out to be statistically significant².

1 First independent clause

2 Second independent clause

Fixing Run-on Sentences

The strategies for resolving run-on sentences are generally the same as the ones for comma splices; for the above example, we can fix the error by:

1 **Inserting terminal punctuation (with or without a transition) between the two independent clauses**

*e.g., The results were tabulated; **ultimately**, they turned out to be statistically significant.*

2 **Placing a comma and coordinating conjunction between the two independent clauses**

*e.g., The results were tabulated, **and** they turned out to be statistically significant.*