

Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences can be two or more sentences punctuated as one sentence, known as *fused sentences*, or they can result from incorrectly joining independent clauses or word groups, such as a *comma splice*. A comma splice results when a writer joins two or more independent clauses by a comma without a coordinating conjunction or a joining word that is not a coordinating conjunction.

Examples

► **Fused**—When a writer fails to use a punctuation mark and a coordinating conjunction between independent clauses, the result is a fused sentence.

Fused: The show begins at 7:30 make sure you are there by 7:15.

Revised sentence: The show begins at 7:30; make sure you are there by 7:15.

► **Comma splice**—When a writer joins two or more independent clauses by a comma without a coordinating conjunction or a joining word that is not a coordinating conjunction, the result is a comma splice.

Comma splice: The show begins at 7:30, make sure you are there by 7:15.

Comma splice: The show begins at 7:30, however, make sure you are there by 7:15.

Revised sentence: The show begins at 7:30, so make sure you are there by 7:15.

Approaches to Revising Run-on Sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four approaches from which to choose:

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*) to create a compound sentence.
2. Use a semicolon or, where appropriate, a colon when the first independent clause introduces the second.
3. Revise the clauses into separate sentences, provided the result is not a series of choppy sentences.
4. Restructure the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.

Consider the following run-on sentence and see how the four approaches are applied in revising.

Run-on: *The buyer and seller could not reach agreement on the sales price they disagreed on the cost of repairs and who would pay closing costs.*

Applying the four approaches to correct the run-on:

1. The buyer and seller could not reach agreement on the sales price, **because** they disagreed on the cost of repairs and who would pay closing costs.
2. The buyer and seller could not reach agreement on the sales price; they disagreed on the cost of repairs and who would pay closing costs.
3. The buyer and seller could not reach agreement on the sales price. **T**hey disagreed on the cost of repairs and who would pay closing costs.
4. **Due to disagreements over the cost of repairs and closing costs,** the buyer and seller could not reach agreement on the sales price.

Practice

Revise the following run-on sentences by applying the four approaches to correcting run-ons.

1. Throughout history, money and religion were closely linked there was little distinction between government and religion.

2. The Astros were very successful in their first few games of the season but they did not seem to generate future tickets.

3. Sue wrote the checks, Maureen typed the letters.

4. The head of the state and the religious leader were often the same person all power rested in one ruler.

5. The next chapter is a difficult one you should start studying soon.

Suggested Revisions: 1. Throughout history, money and religion were closely linked; there was little distinction between government and religion. 2. The Astros were very successful in their first few games of the season, but they did not seem to generate future tickets. 3. Sue wrote the checks, and Maureen typed the letters. 4. The head of the state and the religious leader were often the same person. All power rested in one ruler. 5. Because the next chapter is a difficult one, you should start studying soon.