

## RUN-ON SENTENCES

### Writing Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences are created in one of the following ways.

- Punctuating two complete sentences (“independent clauses”) as one. This is sometimes referred to as a “fused sentence.”

*She went to the gym the machines there were new.*

- Connecting two complete sentences with a comma. This can be called a “comma splice.”

*The sun on the grass is warm, the trees are bending gently in the wind.*

- Connecting more than two complete sentences with *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *for*, *nor*, or *yet*.

*The restaurant has fresh seafood and it's cheap so we would eat there but my sister likes steak better so we'll stay home and grill.*

### Finding Run-On Sentences

Start from the last line of your paper and read backwards, one sentence at a time. Stop at the first comma you see and read the part of the sentence in front of it. Could it be a sentence by itself? If so, read the part of the sentence after it. If it, too, could be a sentence, then you've got a comma splice that you need to fix. If either part can't stand alone, that comma is OK; move on to the next one and do the same thing again.

You can use a similar strategy to find sentences that have too many independent clauses connected by the conjunctions *and*, *or*, *but*, or *so*; look for those words and then read the words before and after them. If you have two or more of these conjunctions connecting three or more independent clauses in the same sentence, you should revise.

### Fixing Run-On Sentences

Use one of the following options to revise a run-on sentence:

- Use a period to divide the original sentence into two or more shorter ones.

*The sun on the grass is warm. The trees are bending gently in the wind.*

- Use a semicolon to separate the two original sentences while showing they are connected.

*The sun on the grass is warm; the trees are bending gently in the wind.*

- Use and, but, or, so, for, nor, or yet to connect the two original ideas.

*She went to the gym, and the machines there were new.*

- Rewrite one of the two original sentences so that it can no longer stand alone.

*(1) She went to the gym because the machines there were new.*

*(2) She went to the gym and saw the machines there were new.*

- Use two or more of these options to revise an original sentence containing more than two independent clauses.

*(1) The restaurant has fresh seafood and it's cheap. We would eat there, but since my sister likes steak better we'll stay home and grill.*

*(2) The restaurant has fresh seafood and it's cheap; we would eat there, but my sister likes steak better. Instead, we'll stay home and grill.*

### Exercises

Examine each sentence and correct it if necessary. Note that some are already correct.

1. The soprano sang a lengthy concert it was mostly opera arias.
2. Football is a great sport and it is very cheap and you only need a ball and you can play it in the park.
3. There was a long line at the gas station, we decided to go elsewhere.
4. When the news came on at 5:30, we all watched attentively.
5. The car was low on oil and needed water in the radiator.
6. "All My Children" is a favorite soap opera even graduate students at Yale love it.
7. My uncle lives in New Delhi, that's a city in India.
8. The distributor had gotten damp the car would not start.
9. I wrote a report, and I learned a lot from it, but it got a "D" because the teacher said it was full of sentence errors, so I decided to learn how to recognize them.
10. On our trip we went swimming in the lake and hiking.

Credit: Adapted from "Run-on Sentences," ISU Writing Center, <https://www.isu.edu/media/libraries/student-success/tutoring/handouts-writing/editing-and-mechanics/runons.pdf>, 2020.

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