

## COMMA SPLICES AND RUN-ON SENTENCES

Comma splices and run-ons are two types of mechanical errors created by incorrectly joining independent clauses. (An independent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb, expresses a complete thought, and can be a sentence on its own.)

A comma splice, or comma fault, is an error caused by joining two independent clauses with a comma but without a coordinating conjunction. Oftentimes, the subject of the second sentence is this, that, these, or those.

Comma splice	Many income tax forms provide a space for indicating contributions to the wildlife fund, this generates revenue for preserving our natural resources.
Corrected	Many income tax forms provide a space for indicating contributions to the wildlife fund. This generates revenue for preserving our natural resources.
OR	Many income tax forms provide a space for indicating contributions to the wildlife fund, and this generates revenue for preserving our natural resources.

A run-on sentence, also called a fused sentence is an error caused by joining two or more independent clauses with no separation at all.

Run-on	Support groups have been organized in almost all of the major cities and researcher efforts to isolate the AIDS virus have been given substantial funding.
Corrected	Support groups have been organized in almost all of the major cities, and researcher efforts to isolate the AIDS virus have been given substantial funding.
Run-on	The construction of the new library will be finished by 2009 the books and journals are being housed in a storage facility.
Corrected	The construction of the new library will be finished by 2009; the books and journals are being housed in a storage facility.
OR	The construction of the new library will be finished by 2009. The books and journals are being housed in a storage facility.

You can correct comma splices and run-ons in several ways.

- Separate the clauses with a period.

Ex. \_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_ .

- Join the independent clauses with a semicolon.

Ex. \_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_ .

- Join the independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction and a comma.

Ex. \_\_\_\_\_ , and \_\_\_\_\_ .  
but  
for  
nor  
or  
so  
yet

- Connect the sentences with a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb followed by a comma. (A conjunctive adverb, like a coordinating conjunction, joins two independent clauses; however, it more strongly expresses the relationship [or a transition] between the two clauses.)

Ex. \_\_\_\_\_ ; however, \_\_\_\_\_ .  
therefore,  
consequently,  
instead,  
*and so on*

- Use a subordinator to make one independent clause dependent upon another.

Ex. Although \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Since  
Because  
*and so on*

**EXERCISE 1:** Read the sentences below to determine whether or not they correctly join independent clauses. If the sentence is correctly punctuated, write a “c” on the line to the left of the sentence. If there is an error, write an “x” on the line and circle the error. Be prepared to explain why each sentence is correct or incorrect.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The roots of alienation go deep into the fabric of American social history, television’s presence in the home encourages their unchecked growth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. AIDS tortures not only the body, it also damages the ego, the psyche, and the lifestyle of those it afflicts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The lens focuses the light on the retina, this is the thin membrane covering the posterior surface of the eyeball.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Violence, of course, is rampant in the media yet it is usually set in some kind of moral context.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Solar energy could be harnessed to become the chief energy source on earth, and dangerous forms of energy could be eliminated.

**EXERCISE 2:** Add the appropriate punctuation, or change punctuation already present, wherever needed in the following sentences.

1. Most tarantulas live in the tropics but several species occur in the temperate zone and a few are common in the southern United States.
2. Typically, shopping centers are designed with one or more large department stores as magnets, these are located among the smaller stores to encourage impulse buying.
3. Both divorced mothers and divorced fathers have legitimate concerns but their radically different viewpoints create poor communication between angry spouses.
4. All societies—whether primitive, agricultural, or industrial—use energy, they make things, they distribute things.
5. Congress passed the bill after long hours of debate there were strong convictions on both sides.
6. The railroads, highways, and cities that will spring up may divert attention, however, they cannot cover up society’s decay.
7. I looked across the fire lane at a section that had been burned three weeks before and the ground was already covered with light green.
8. Homelessness itself is often the precipitating factor, for example, many pregnant women without homes are denied care because they constantly travel from one shelter to another.