

Run-ons: Fused Sentences and Comma Splices

When two independent clauses (complete thoughts that can stand alone as sentences) are joined together, it is important to connect them with proper punctuation. Otherwise, the reader may not be able to tell when one idea ends and the next begins. **Run-on** is a general term given to a sentence which joins two or more independent clauses without proper punctuation. **Fused Sentences** and **Comma Splices** are specific types of run-on sentences.

Fused

Sentence: A **Fused Sentence** occurs when two independent clauses are joined together without *any* connecting punctuation.

Example: Margaret Atwood is best known for her novels her essays and poems are also worth reading.

Comma

Splice: If the independent clauses are joined by a comma only, the error is called a **Comma Splice**.

Example: Margaret Atwood is best known for her novels, her essays and poems are also worth reading.

Strategy: Ask yourself, “How many independent clauses are in this sentence?” If the sentence consists of two or more independent clauses punctuated like either of the examples above, your sentence will need to be revised. Both **Fused Sentences** and **Comma Splices** can be revised in any of the four following ways:

Solution 1: Separate the two independent clauses into two sentences.

Example: Margaret Atwood is best known for her novels. Her essays and poems are also worth reading.

Solution 2: Connect the two independent clauses with a semicolon if they express closely related ideas.

Example: Margaret Atwood is best known for her novels; her essays and poems are also worth reading.

Solution 3: Connect the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So— the first letters of which create the word **FANBOYS**).

Example: Margaret Atwood is best known for her novels, *but* her essays and poems are also worth reading.

Solution 4: Make one of the clauses dependent on the other independent clause by adding a subordinating word (such as: *since, when, after, while, because, although, etc.*) to it.

Note: Dependent clauses are sometimes called subordinate clauses.

Example: *Although* Margaret Atwood is best known for her novels, her essays and poems are also worth reading.

****Do the exercises on the back of this handout to practice what you’ve learned.****

Exercise:

EACH SENTENCE BELOW CONSISTS OF TWO OR MORE INDEPENDENT CLAUSES. PLACE BRACKETS AROUND EACH INDEPENDENT CLAUSE, AND DETERMINE WHETHER THE SENTENCE IS A COMMA SPLICE OR A FUSED SENTENCE. CORRECT EACH SENTENCE WITH ONE OF THE FOUR TECHNIQUES YOU JUST LEARNED.

1. Ellen had her hands full taking care of Stephen, he was at the age where he was full of mischief.
2. The sky turned gray bolts of lightning flashed in the east thunder rolled across the mountains.
3. Americans are more conscious of the need for fitness, they have become active sports enthusiasts, they are more interested in good nutrition, they are aware of the need to reduce stress.
4. Television can be entertaining, it can also be boring.
5. Children learn from their parents' examples parents' behavior is an important part of their children's experience.
6. The life of a farmer is a lonely one his opportunities to socialize are limited because of the constant attention he must give to the things he cultivates.
7. Oil imports are very expensive, we must learn to be economical in our use of energy.
8. Advanced methods of communication have made the world smaller, people are thus brought closer together, we find ourselves with common interests.
9. Some scientists call the computer essentially "stupid" others fear its capacity to "think."
10. College freshmen need help in making the transition from high school, the sheer size of most colleges can be a problem to new students.