Run-on Sentences
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What Are Run-ons?

A run-on is two or more complete thoughts that are run together with no adequate punctuation to mark the break between them. As a result of the run-on, the reader is confused and unsure of where one thought ends and the next one begins. Two types of run-ons are fused sentences and comma splices.

Fused sentences have no punctuation at all to mark the break between the thoughts.

**Fused Sentence**

Rhonda decided to stop eating pie she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.

In other run-ons, known as comma splices, a comma is used to connect or "splice" together the two complete thoughts. However, a comma alone is not enough to connect two complete thoughts. Some connection stronger than a comma alone is needed.

**Comma Splice**

Rhonda decided to stop eating pie, she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.

Comma splices are the most common kind of run-on. They have a comma at the dividing point between complete thoughts. However, the comma alone is not sufficient. A stronger, clearer mark is needed between the two thoughts.

People often write run-ons when the second complete thought begins with one of the following words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>we</th>
<th>there</th>
<th>now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td></td>
<td>that</td>
<td>next</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rhonda decided to stop eating pie she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.
Rhonda decided to stop eating pie. She didn't want to risk high cholesterol.

2. Use a comma plus a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet) to connect the two complete thoughts.
   Rhonda decided to stop eating pie she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.
   Rhonda decided to stop eating pies, for she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.

3. Use a semicolon to connect the two complete thoughts.
   Rhonda decided to stop eating pie she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.
   Rhonda decided to stop eating pie; she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.

Note: Semicolons are often misused. Take care to use them correctly when correcting fragments.

4. Use subordination.
   Rhonda decided to stop eating pie she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.
   Rhonda decided to stop eating pie because she didn't want to risk high cholesterol.

Exercise 1

Correct the run-on by putting a period at the end of the first thought and a capital letter at the start of the second thought.

1. Gerald's motorcycle broke down he was unable to go to class.

2. The subway train sped through the station a blur of windows and figures flashed in front of my eyes.
3. Jenny panicked the gondola had stalled four hundred feet above ground.

4. Half the class aced the exam the other half of the students flunked.

5. One reason for the high cost of vegetables is the cost of gasoline one gallon now costs over $2.50.

The answers can be found on page 11.

**Exercise 2**

Rewrite the sentences by inserting the comma and the joining word (*and, but, for, so*) that logically connects the two thoughts in each sentence.

1. The telephone was ringing the cell phone was also.

2. Something was obviously wrong with the lawnmower it wasn’t cutting the grass.
3. Tom and Jerry enjoyed the movie, they wished the popcorn had been less expensive.

4. Brett moved from Bellingham to Bellevue he wanted to get as far away as possible from his ex-girlfriend.

5. I decided to go back to school I decided to change my major.

The answers can be found on page 11.

Exercise 3

Insert a semicolon where the break occurs between the two complete thoughts in each of the following sentences.

1. Our 7Y Guide subscription just ran out nobody remembered to renew it.

2. Suzie wanted to watch a Star Trek rerun the rest of the family insisted on turning to the network news.

3. Bonnie put a freshly baked batch of chocolate-chip cookies on the counter to cool everyone gathered round for samples.

4. About $25 million worth of pizza is eaten each year an average of 300 new pizza parlors open every week.
5. Nate never heard the third-base coach screaming for him to stop he was out at home plate by ten feet.

The answers can be found on page 11.

**Common Transitional Words**

Transitional expressions, which interrupt sentences, often indicate run-ons. Transitional expressions should be set off with a semi-colon (before) and a comma after.

- however
- moreover
- therefore
- on the other hand
- in addition
- as a result
- nevertheless
- also
- consequently
- instead
- furthermore
- otherwise
- nonetheless
- in fact
- finally
- in contrast
- then

**Exercise 4**

For each item, choose a logical transitional word from the list above and write in the space provided. In addition, put a semicolon *before* the transition and comma *after* it.

1. The tree must be sprayed with insecticide __ the bugs will kill the fruit.

2. I agreed to help the comedian with his act___ I heckled him.

3. Fred never finished reading the novel____ he bought the Cliff notes.

4. My house was robbed last week _____ I bought a security alarm.
5. Juanita is taking two courses this semester ______ she is working sixty hours a week.

Common Dependent Words
after before
although even though
as if
because since

Exercise 5

Choose a logical dependent word from the list above and write it in the space provided.

1. The instructor is lowering my grade in the course _______ I missed three major assignments.

2. _______ the roller coaster dropped a few feet, my stomach rose a few feet.

3. _______ the softball game was being played, we sent out for a Chinese food.

The answers can be found on page 12.
Most of the information and exercise ideas in this module were taken from *Sentence Skills, Form A, 7th ed.*, by John Langan.

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**Answer Key**

**Exercise 1**

1. Gerald's motorcycle broke down. He was unable to go to class.

2. The subway train sped through the station. A blur of windows and figures flashed in front of my eyes
3. Jenny panicked. The gondola had stalled four hundred feet above ground.
4. Half the class aced the exam. The other half of the students flunked.
5. One reason for the high cost of vegetables is the cost of gasoline. One gallon now costs over $2.50.

Exercise 2

1. The telephone was ringing, and the cell phone was also.
2. Something was obviously wrong with the lawnmower, for it wasn’t cutting the grass.
3. Tom and Jerry enjoyed the movie, but they wished the popcorn had been less expensive.
4. Brett moved from Bellingham to Bellevue, for he wanted to get as far away as possible from his ex-girlfriend.
5. I decided to go back to school, and I decided to change my major.

Exercise 3

1. Our TV Guide subscription just ran out; nobody remembered to renew it.
2. Suzie wanted to watch a Star Trek rerun; the rest of the family insisted on turning to the network news.
3. Bonnie put a freshly baked batch of chocolate-chip cookies on the counter to cool; everyone gathered round for samples.
4. About $25 million worth of pizza is eaten each year; an average of 300 new pizza parlors open every week.
5. Nate never heard the third-base coach screaming for him to stop; he was out at home plate by ten feet.

Exercise 4

1. The tree must be sprayed with insecticide; otherwise, the bugs will kill the fruit.
2. I agreed to help the comedian with his act; consequently, I heckled him.
3. Fred never finished reading the novel; therefore, he bought the Cliff notes.
4. My house was robbed last week; as a result, I bought a security alarm.
5. Juanita is taking two courses this semester; moreover, she is working sixty hours a week.

Exercise 5

1. The instructor is lowering my grade in the course because I missed three major assignments.
2. When the roller coaster dropped a few feet, my stomach rose a few feet.

3. While the softball game was being played, we sent out for a Chinese food.