



Run-on Sentences and Comma Splices

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What Is a Sentence?

A complete sentence is made up of two or more parts:

1. **A subject** (who or what the sentence is about)
2. **A verb** (what the action is that is taking place)
3. **Sometimes a “completer,”** a word or phrase that finishes out a sentence and turns a group of words into a complete thought.

You have to be able to find the beginnings and endings of sentences in order to punctuate them correctly.

The next few slides show you some examples.

Sentence Examples

Here is an example:

Not all people are fans of going out on New Years eve.

Subject: Who or what are we talking about? Who or what is the focus on the sentence?

Not all people

Verb: What about these people? What are they doing? Not all people **are**



Completer: Not all people are what? This sentence needs something to finish it off, to make it a complete thought: Not all people are **fans of going out on New Years eve.**

Sentence Examples

Here is another example: **Angela dropped.**

Subject: Who or what are we talking about? Who or what is the focus of the sentence?
Angela

Verb: What about this person? What is she doing? Angela **dropped.**

Completer: Angela dropped what? This sentence is not yet complete because we need to know what Angela dropped. A vase? A picture frame? A puppy?

Or, as one of my students said in class once, Angela dropped.....dead. That one made me laugh. And then it made me nervous. Anyway, this sentence needs something to finish the thought.

Angela dropped **an expensive music box.**

Angela dropped **a frozen turkey on her foot. (true: I'm accident prone)**

Angela dropped **\$75 on a new purse. (not a true story: I am cheap)**

Angela dropped **by the library to pick up the latest David Sedaris book.**

Sentence Examples

Here is a final example:

The Wahlert High School choir performed.

Subject: Who or what are we talking about? Who or what is the focus of the sentence? **The Wahlert High School choir**

Verb: What about the choir? What is it doing? The Wahlert High School choir **performed.**

Completer: This is actually a complete sentence on its own. For example, you could see something like this in a newspaper review:

Last Friday night, audience members were in for a real treat. Soprano Amy Dolan sang a medley of swing band numbers backed by the Wahlert High School band. The Wahlert High School choir performed.

You could add additional information, such as the Wahlert High School performed **a tribute to Broadway musicals.** This additional information makes the sentence more specific, but the details aren't *necessary* to have a complete grammatical sentence.

Sentence Examples

You can mentally walk your way through a sentence asking these questions:

For Christmas this year, **my brother Steve**
wrapped up a 50-pound bag of bird seed.
I laughed.

Who or what is the sentence about: **my brother Steve**
What about Steve? What did Steve do? **wrapped up**
My brother Steve wrapped up what? **a 50-pound bag**
of bird seed
>>>>>You now have a complete thought.

Who: **I**

What about "I"? What did "I" do? **I laughed**

This is a complete thought, so nothing needs to be added. Again, additional information could be added to make the sentence more clear or detailed, but that information isn't necessary for a complete sentence.

I laughed at what a terrible job my brother did wrapping but am very grateful my birds will eat this winter.



Sentence Errors

Two types of errors exist when it comes to punctuating separate sentences. These errors will be discussed in the rest of this presentation:

1. Run-on Sentences
2. Comma Splices

Run-on Sentences

What is a run-on sentence?	A run-on sentence occurs when two complete sentences sit right next to each other with no words or punctuation to separate them.
What are some examples?	<p>I forgot to turn the timer on for my oven my brownies were burned.</p> <p>My mom lives in Iowa she will be so happy when the Iowa caucuses are over.</p> <p>This winter has been really cold I've spent a lot more time outside walking my dog anyway.</p>
Why are these run-on sentences?	<p>These are run-on sentences because there are two separate sentences back to back with nothing in between them.</p> <p>I forgot to turn the timer on for my oven my brownies were burned.</p> <p>My mom lives in Iowa she will be so happy when the Iowa caucuses are over.</p> <p>This winter has been really cold I've spent a lot more time outside walking my dog anyway.</p>

Fixing Run-On Sentences

There are four methods to fix run-on sentences.

**Method 1:
Period + Capital
Letter**

I forgot to turn the timer on for my oven. **M**y brownies were burned.

My mom lives in Iowa. **S**he will be so happy when the Iowa caucuses are over.

This winter has been really cold. **I**'ve spent a lot more time outside walking my dog anyway.

**Method 2:
Comma +
Coordinating
Conjunction
(for, and, nor, but,
or, yet, so = fanboys)**

I forgot to turn the timer on for my oven, **so** my brownies were burned.

My mom lives in Iowa, **and** she will be so happy when the Iowa caucuses are over.

This winter has been really cold, **but** I've spent a lot more time outside walking my dog anyway.

**Method 3:
Semicolon**

I forgot to turn the timer on for my oven; my brownies were burned.

My mom lives in Iowa; she will be so happy when the Iowa caucuses are over.

Or

This winter has been really cold; I've spent a lot more time outside walking my dog anyway.

**Method 4:
Semicolon and
Conjunctive Adverb**

Note: Conjunctive adverbs are explained on the next two slides.

Semicolons and Conjunctive Adverbs

There is one more way to join two complete sentences that is a bit more sophisticated. That method involves a semicolon and a *conjunctive adverb*. Here is a list of conjunctive adverbs:

Conjunctive Adverbs			
accordingly	also	anyway	besides
certainly	consequently	finally	further
furthermore	hence	however	incidentally
indeed	instead	likewise	meanwhile
moreover	namely	nevertheless	next
nonetheless	now	otherwise	similarly
still	then	thereafter	therefore
thus	undoubtedly		

Semicolons and Conjunctive Adverbs

You can use one of these words and a semicolon to join two particularly related sentences. The conjunctive adverb shows the relationship between the two ideas. Note that you also need a **comma** after the conjunctive adverb:

I forgot to turn the timer on for my oven; **therefore**, my brownies were burned.

My mom lives in Iowa; **certainly**, she will be so happy when the Iowa caucuses are over.

This winter has been really cold; **however**, I've spent a lot more time outside walking my dog anyway.



Comma Splices

What is comma splice?	A comma splice occurs when two complete sentences sit right next to each other with only a comma to separate them.
What are some examples?	<p>I really enjoy the television show <i>Supernatural</i>, those stories get pretty outlandish.</p> <p>Hot chocolate alone is great, hot chocolate with marshmallows is heavenly.</p> <p>Last weekend I had the stomach flu, I hope it wasn't because I drank so much hot chocolate with marshmallows.</p>
Why are these comma splices?	<p>These are comma splices because there are two separate sentences back to back with only a comma to separate them.</p> <p>I really enjoy the television show <i>Supernatural</i> , those stories get pretty outlandish.</p> <p>Hot chocolate alone is great , hot chocolate with marshmallows is heavenly.</p> <p>Last weekend I had the stomach flu , I hope it wasn't because I drank so much hot chocolate with marshmallows.</p>

Fixing Comma Splices

**There are four methods to fix comma splices.
They are the exact same methods you use to fix run-on sentences.**

Period + Capital Letter	<p>I really enjoy the television show <i>Supernatural</i>. Those stories get pretty outlandish.</p> <p>Hot chocolate alone is great. Hot chocolate with marshmallows is heavenly.</p> <p>Last weekend I had the stomach flu. I hope it wasn't because I drank so much hot chocolate with marshmallows.</p>
Comma + coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so = fanboys)	<p>I really enjoy the television show <i>Supernatural</i>, yet those stories get pretty outlandish.</p> <p>Hot chocolate alone is great, but hot chocolate with marshmallows is heavenly.</p> <p>Last weekend I had the stomach flu, and I hope it wasn't because I drank so much hot chocolate with marshmallows.</p>
Semicolon Or Semicolon and Conjunctive Adverb	<p>I really enjoy the television show <i>Supernatural</i>; nonetheless, those stories get pretty outlandish.</p> <p>Hot chocolate alone is great; however, hot chocolate with marshmallows is heavenly.</p> <p>Last weekend I had the stomach flu; indeed, I hope it wasn't because I drank so much hot chocolate with marshmallows.</p>

Remember Your Four Choices

Sentence. **S**entence.

>>>>period + Capital Letter

Sentence, **and** sentence.

>>>comma + coordinating conjunction (fanboys)

Sentence; sentence.

>>>semicolon

Sentence; **however**, sentence.

>>>semicolon + conjunctive adverb comma

Do You Still Have Questions?

If you still have questions, please stop by the Writing Lab (DI20).

