

# The Writing Lab

## Comma Splices

Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick

To understand comma splices, you have to first understand how to identify individual sentences.

### What Is a Sentence?

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

- **A subject** (who or what is the sentence about? Who or what is performing the action?)
- **A verb** (what action is taking place? Sometimes, an action is a state of being or existence.)
- **Sometimes a “completer”** (are there other words required to form a complete thought?)

Here is an example: Many people are fans of going out on New Year’s Eve.

- **Subject:** Who or what is the focus on the sentence? **Many people**
- **Verb:** What about these people? What are they doing? **Many people are**
- **Completer:** Many people are what? This sentence needs something to finish it off, to make it a complete thought: **Many people are fans of going out on New Year’s Eve.**

Here is another example: Angela dropped.

- **Subject:** 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 didn’t.

### What is a Comma Splice?

A comma splice occurs when you have two separate sentences, back to back, with only a comma to divide them. There are four main ways to fix comma splices:

#### Method 1: Period + Capital Letter (Sentence. Sentence.)

- You want to avoid separating all sentences from each other in this way; otherwise, your writing sounds choppy and can come off as sounding like a child wrote it.

#### Method 2: Comma + Coordinating Conjunction (Sentence, coordinating conjunction sentence.)

- There are **7** coordinating conjunctions: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so** (those words spell out the word **fanboys**). Coordinating conjunctions show how ideas relate.

#### Method 3: Semicolon (Sentence; sentence.)

- Writers use semicolons when the ideas are particularly related to each other. The writers want readers to see the two ideas as partners of equal importance.

#### Method 4: Semicolon + Conjunctive Adverb + Comma (Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence.)

- Conjunctive adverbs show how the two ideas are related. Here are some examples:

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

### Examples of Methods to Fix Comma Splices

<b>Original Comma Splice</b>	This weekend is the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon, the weather is supposed to be terrible for those poor runners.
<b>Sentence. Sentence.</b>	This weekend is the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon. <u>The</u> weather is supposed to be terrible for those poor runners.
<b>Sentence, coordinating conjunction sentence.</b>	This weekend is the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon, <u>but</u> the weather is supposed to be terrible for those poor runners.
<b>Sentence; sentence.</b>	This weekend is the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon; the weather is supposed to be terrible for those poor runners.
<b>Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence.</b>	This weekend is the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon; <u>however</u> , the weather is supposed to be terrible for those poor runners.

<b>Original Comma Splice</b>	Looking up “medical oddities” on Google Images was a terrible mistake, I will never recover from the shock of what I saw.
<b>Sentence. Sentence.</b>	Looking up “medical oddities” on Google Images was a terrible mistake. <u>I</u> will never recover from the shock of what I saw.
<b>Sentence, coordinating conjunction sentence.</b>	Looking up “medical oddities” on Google Images was a terrible mistake, <u>and</u> I will never recover from the shock of what I saw.
<b>Sentence; sentence.</b>	Looking up “medical oddities” on Google Images was a terrible mistake; I will never recover from the shock of what I saw.
<b>Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence.</b>	Looking up “medical oddities” on Google Images was a terrible mistake; <u>indeed</u> , I will never recover from the shock of what I saw.

<b>Original Comma Splice</b>	Appreciating art, music, photography, and literature helps a person live more fully, try to sprinkle these kinds of courses into your college career.
<b>Sentence. Sentence.</b>	Appreciating art, music, photography, and literature helps a person live more fully. <u>Try</u> to sprinkle these kinds of courses into your college career.
<b>Sentence, coordinating conjunction sentence.</b>	Appreciating art, music, photography, and literature helps a person live more fully, <u>so</u> try to sprinkle these kinds of courses into your college career.
<b>Sentence; sentence.</b>	Appreciating art, music, photography, and literature helps a person live more fully; try to sprinkle these kinds of courses into your college career.
<b>Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence.</b>	Appreciating art, music, photography, and literature helps a person live more fully; <u>therefore</u> , try to sprinkle these kinds of courses into your college career.