



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 just a state of being or existence.)
- **Sometimes a “completer”** (are there any 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 made me nervous.

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 in all of the universe: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (those words spell out the word fanboys). Coordinating conjunctions show how two the ideas are related.

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.)

- This is probably the most sophisticated way to connect two sentences together. Conjunctive adverbs show how the two ideas are related. Here are some examples of conjunctive adverbs:

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

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

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

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