



The Writing Lab

Run-on Sentences

Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick

To understand run-on sentences, 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: Last night I ate too many enchiladas for supper.

- **Subject:** Who or what is the focus on the sentence? **I**
- **Verb:** What about these people? What are they doing? **I ate**
- **Completer:** I ate what? This sentence needs something to finish it off, to make it a complete thought: **I ate too many enchiladas for supper.**

Here is another example: Steven claimed.

- **Subject:** Who or what is the focus of the sentence? **Steven**
- **Verb:** What about this person? What is he doing? **Steven claimed.**
- **Completer:** Steven claimed what? This sentence is not yet complete because we need to know what Steven claimed. He saw Bigfoot? He won the lottery? His favorite television show is *Supernatural*? This sentence needs something to finish the thought.

What is a Run-on Sentence?

A run-on sentence occurs when you have two separate sentences, back to back, with nothing to divide them. There are four main ways to fix run-on sentences:

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:

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|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 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

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| Original Run-on Sentence | I forgot to turn the oven timer on when I was making my brownies last night the brownies now look like little pieces of coal. |
| Sentence. Sentence. | I forgot to turn the oven timer on when I was making my brownies last night. The brownies now look like little pieces of coal. |
| Sentence, coordinating conjunction sentence. | I forgot to turn the oven timer on when I was making my brownies last night, <u>and</u> the brownies now look like little pieces of coal. |
| Sentence; sentence. | I forgot to turn the oven timer on when I was making my brownies last night; the brownies now look like little pieces of coal. |
| Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence. | I forgot to turn the oven timer on when I was making my brownies last night; <u>therefore</u> , the brownies now look like little pieces of coal. |

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| Original Run-on Sentence | Many people are fans of going out on New Year's Eve I would rather stay home and eat Chinese food. |
| Sentence. Sentence. | Many people are fans of going out on New Year's Eve. I would rather stay home and eat Chinese food. |
| Sentence, coordinating conjunction sentence. | Many people are fans of going out on New Year's Eve, <u>but</u> I would rather stay home and eat Chinese food. |
| Sentence; sentence. | Many people are fans of going out on New Year's Eve; I would rather stay home and eat Chinese food. |
| Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence. | Many people are fans of going out on New Year's Eve; <u>however</u> , I would rather stay home and eat Chinese food. |

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| Original Run-on Sentence | This past winter was really mild my dog and I have spent a lot of time walking in the park. |
| Sentence. Sentence. | This past winter was really mild. My dog and I have spent a lot of time walking in the park. |
| Sentence, coordinating conjunction sentence. | This past winter was really mild, <u>so</u> my dog and I have spent a lot of time walking in the park. |
| Sentence; sentence. | This past winter was really mild; my dog and I have spent a lot of time walking in the park. |
| Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence. | This past winter was really mild; <u>consequently</u> , my dog and I have spent a lot of time walking in the park. |