

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:

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 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. <u>The</u> 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.

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. <u>I</u> 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.

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. <u>My</u> 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.