
Run-on Sentences

When two or more sentences are improperly joined—either by a comma without a conjunction, by a conjunction without a comma, by an improper conjunction, or by no punctuation at all—they are called **run-on sentences**.

CASE 1: THE COMMA SPLICE

Two or more sentences can **never** be joined with just a comma. Run-on sentences of this type can be easily fixed by adding a coordinating conjunction (i.e. *and, but, or, for*), inserting a subordinating conjunction (i.e. *because, since, if*), using a semi-colon, or simply making two (or more) complete sentences.

INCORRECT	When the professor returned my paper I was shocked, I had gotten an A.
CORRECTED	When the professor returned my paper I was shocked, for I had gotten an A.
CORRECTED	When the professor returned my paper I was shocked because I had gotten an A.
CORRECTED	When the professor returned my paper I was shocked; I had gotten an A.
CORRECTED	When the professor returned my paper I was shocked. I had gotten an A.

CASE 2: THE MISSING COMMA

When joining two or more sentences with coordinating conjunctions, a comma **must** be inserted before each conjunction. Using coordinating conjunctions without commas results in run-on sentences.

INCORRECT	We went to the store and after we had come home and unpacked the groceries my mother wanted to cook a pot of chili but she had forgotten to buy spaghetti.
CORRECTED	We went to the store, and after we had come home and unpacked the groceries my mother wanted to cook a pot of chili, but she had forgotten to buy spaghetti.

CASE 3: IMPROPER CONJUNCTION

Another type of run-on sentence consists of two or more main clauses joined by an improper conjunction. This mistake commonly occurs when writers incorrectly use transition words (i.e. *however, thus, therefore, hence, otherwise, then*) as coordinating conjunctions—that is, as sentence joiners.

INCORRECT	My math professor takes attendance, therefore I have to go to class every day.
CORRECTED	My math professor takes attendance. Therefore, I have to go to class every day.
CORRECTED	My math professor takes attendance; therefore, I have to go to class every day.

INCORRECT	I was unable to make my appointment, however I was able to reschedule.
CORRECTED	I was unable to make my appointment. However, I was able to reschedule.
CORRECTED	I was unable to make my appointment; however, I was able to reschedule.

CASE 4: OMITTED PUNCTUATION

A final, less frequent type of run-on occurs when writers omit punctuation in general.

INCORRECT	After my last class I ate lunch in the cafeteria with my friends they were going to play play softball in the afternoon and asked me if I would like to play I told them I had too much calculus homework to do and I also have a philosophy midterm tomorrow.
CORRECTED	After my last class I ate lunch in the cafeteria with my friends. They were going to play softball in the afternoon and asked me if I would like to play. I told them I had too much calculus homework to do, and I also have a philosophy midterm tomorrow.