

# Run-On Sentences\*

A **RUN-ON SENTENCE**, often referred to as a fused sentence, occurs when two complete sentences are joined without proper punctuation. A run-on sentence may be corrected using one of two approaches: 1) Locate the two independent clauses, and separate them with a period or semicolon; or 2) Separate the two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so*).

◆ It is important to realize that the length of a sentence really has nothing to do with whether a sentence is a run-on or not; being a run-on is a structural flaw that can plague even a very short sentence.

Run-on: It's cold outside, put a coat on.

Corrected: It's cold outside. Put a coat on.

◆ An extremely large sentence might be a “run-off-at-the-mouth” sentence, but it can be otherwise, sound, structurally.

Run-on: Dr. Collins gave her students a pop quiz based on chapter two of The Shadow Man it was so difficult that many students could only answer two of the ten questions.

Corrected: Dr. Collins gave her students a pop quiz based on chapter two of The Shadow Man. It was so difficult that many students could only answer two of the ten questions.

◆ When two independent clauses are connected by *only* a comma, they constitute a run-on sentence that is called a **comma-splice**. When using a comma to connect two independent clauses—as previously stated—it must be accompanied by a conjunction (*and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so*).

Run-on: The sun is high, put on some sun-screen.

Corrected: The sun is high, so put on some sun-screen.

◆ Run-on sentences happen typically under the following circumstances:

A) When an independent clause gives an order or directive based on what was said in the prior independent clause.

Run-on: This next chapter has a lot of difficult information in it, you should start studying right away.

Corrected: This next chapter has a lot of difficult information in it; you should start studying right away. (*Note: A period may also be used interchangeably with a semicolon.*)

B) When two independent clauses are connected by a transitional expression (conjunctive adverb) such as *however, moreover, nevertheless*.

Run-on: Mr. Nguyen has sent his four children to ivy-league colleges, however, he has sacrificed his health working day and night in that dusty bakery.

Corrected: Mr. Nguyen has sent his four children to ivy-league colleges; however, he has sacrificed his health working day and night in that dusty bakery.

C) When the second of two independent clauses contains a pronoun that connects it to the first independent clause.

Run-on: This computer doesn't make sense to me, it came without a manual

Corrected: This computer doesn't make sense to me. It came without a manual.

(*Note: Although these two clauses are quite brief, and the ideas are closely related, this is a run-on sentence. Period usage will cure this sentence.*)

\*Sample format derived from various university writing centers