

## COMMA SPLICES AND RUN-ON / FUSED SENTENCES

Both comma splices and run-on sentences happen when a writer does not separate two independent clauses properly.

A **comma splice** occurs when a writer puts a comma (and only a comma) between two complete sentences (two independent clauses):

*Tommy will move to San Francisco, his car died.*

*Jody no longer works at The Pyramid, now she is unemployed.*

A **run-on error/fused sentence** occurs when a writer does not put any punctuation between two complete sentences (two independent clauses):

*Tommy will move to San Francisco his car died.*

*Jody no longer works at The Pyramid now she is unemployed.*

If you are not sure what an independent clause is, look at the following review of “phrase,” “clause,” “independent clause,” and “dependent clause”:

A **phrase** is a group of words that does not express a complete thought. It might have a subject or a verb, but it does not have both. As a result, the phrase does not make sense standing by itself:

*Buying a turtle*

*Tired from bowling all night*

*Tonight at the park*

By contrast, a **clause** has a *subject* and a verb that goes with the subject; a clause makes sense by itself.

*Tommy bought a turtle.*

*He is tired from bowling all night.*

The above examples are called **independent clauses** because they make sense on their own. However, if you put a “dependent clause marker” in front of them, they lose their independence. They are now called dependent clauses because they need another independent clause to make sense as part of a complex sentence.

***When** Tommy bought a turtle (it tried to bite him.)*

***Although** he is tired from bowling all night, (he still takes care of Jody during the day.)*

There are several ways to fix comma splices and run-on sentences:

- **If the two sentences express separate ideas, use a period.**
  - ⊗ *Tommy works at the grocery store, he is from Indiana. (CS)*
  - ⊗ *Tommy works at the grocery store he is from Indiana. (RO)*
  - ⊙ *Tommy works at the grocery store. He is from Indiana.*
- **Most of the time, when writers make comma-splice errors, they think of two ideas as somehow related. If the two ideas expressed in the two clauses are closely related, replace the comma with a semicolon:**
  - ⊗ *Jody sleeps all day, she is a vampire. (CS)*
  - ⊗ *Jody sleeps all day she is a vampire. (RO)*
  - ⊙ *Jody sleeps all day. She is a vampire.*

- **You can also express the logical connection between the ideas in two independent clauses by using a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*):**
  - ⊗ *The Emperor really likes his dogs, they help him patrol his city, San Francisco.* (CS)
  - ⊗ *The Emperor really likes his dogs they help him patrol his city, San Francisco.* (RO)
  - ⊙ *The Emperor really likes his dogs, for they help him patrol his city, San Francisco.*
- **You can also turn one of the two independent clauses into a dependent clause by using a subordinating conjunction. Note that, if the dependent clause follows the main clause, you omit the comma:**
  - ⊙ *The Emperor really likes his dogs because they help him patrol his city, San Francisco.*
  - ⊙ *Kurt never liked Jody although Tommy always loved her.*
  - ⊙ *Kurt never liked Jody whereas Tommy always loved her.*
- **You can also express the logical connection between two ideas in two independent clauses by using a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb (however, therefore, moreover, consequently, ...) followed by a comma:**
  - ⊙ *Kurt never liked Jody; however, Tommy always loved her.*
  - ⊙ *Rivera is really confused because he saw Jody die; moreover, he examined the body.*

**Overview: Sentence Patterns to Fix Comma Splices and Run-On Sentences:**

Independent clause. Independent clause.

Independent clause; independent clause.

Independent clause, [FANBOY] independent clause.

Independent clause [SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION] independent clause.

Independent clause; [CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB], independent clause.

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