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 the 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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