

RUN-ON SENTENCES

Writing Run-on Sentences

Run-on sentences are created in one of the following ways.

- Punctuating two complete sentences (“independent clauses”) as one. This can be called a “fused sentence.”

She went the gym the machines there were new.

- Connecting two complete sentences with a comma. This can be called a “comma splice.”

The sun on the grass is warm, the trees are bending gently in the wind.

- Connecting more than two complete sentences with **and**, **but**, **or**, **so**, **for**, **nor**, or **yet**.

The restaurant has fresh seafood and it's cheap so we would eat there but my sister likes steak better so we'll stay home and grill.

Finding Run-on Sentences

Start from the last line of your paper and read backwards, one sentence at a time. Stop at the first comma you see and read the part of the sentence in front of it. Could it be a sentence by itself? If so, read the part of the sentence after it. If it, too, could be a sentence, then you've got a comma splice that you need to fix. If either part can't stand alone, that comma is OK; move on to the next one and do the same thing again. You can use a similar strategy to find sentences that have too many independent clauses connected by **and**, **or**, **but**, or **so**: look for those words and then read the words before and after them. If you've got two or more of them connecting three or more independent clauses in the same sentence, you'll need to revise.

Fixing Run-on Sentences

Use one of the following options to revise a run-on sentence.

- Use a period to divide the original sentence into two or more shorter ones.

The sun on the grass is warm. The trees are bending gently in the wind.

- Use a semicolon to separate the two original sentences while showing they're connected.

The sun on the grass is warm; the trees are bending gently in the wind.

- Use **and**, **but**, **or**, **so**, **for**, **nor**, or **yet** to connect the two original ideas.

She went the gym, and the machines there were new.

- Rewrite one of the two original sentences so that it can no longer stand alone.

She went the gym because the machines there were new.

She went the gym and saw the machines there were new.

- Use two or more of these options to revise an original sentence containing **more** than two independent clauses.

The restaurant has fresh seafood and it's cheap. We would eat there, but since my sister likes steak better we'll stay home and grill.

The restaurant has fresh seafood and it's cheap; we would eat there, but my sister likes steak better. Instead, we'll stay home and grill.

Practice

Examine each sentence and correct it if necessary. Some are already correct.

1. The soprano sang a lengthy concert it was mostly opera arias.
2. Football is a great sport and it is very cheap and you only need a ball and you can play it in the park.
3. There was a long line at the gas station, we decided to go elsewhere.
4. When the news came on at 5:30, we all watched attentively.
5. The car was low on oil and needed water in the radiator.
6. "All My Children" is a favorite soap opera even graduate students at Yale love it.
7. My uncle lives in New Delhi, that's a city in India.
8. The distributor had gotten damp the car would not start.
9. I wrote a report, and I learned a lot from it, but it got a "D" because the teacher said it was full of sentence errors, so I decided to learn how to recognize them.
10. On our trip we went swimming in the lake and hiking.

Possible Correct Answers

1. The soprano sang a lengthy concert; it was mostly opera arias.
2. Football is a great sport and it is very cheap. You only need a ball and you can play it in the park.
3. There was a long line at the gas station, so we decided to go elsewhere.
4. Correct; "when the news came on at 5:30" cannot stand alone.
5. Correct; "needed water in the radiator" cannot stand alone.
6. "All My Children" is a favorite soap opera; even graduate students at Yale love it.
7. My uncle lives in New Delhi, which is a city in India.
8. The distributor had gotten damp, so the car would not start.
9. I wrote a report, and I learned a lot from it. However, it got a "D" because the teacher said it was full of sentence errors, so I decided to learn how to recognize them.
10. Correct; "hiking" cannot stand alone.

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