Sentence Boundaries: Run-Ons & Fragments

Run-ons (a.k.a. “fused sentences” and “comma splices”) and fragments in your writing show that you don’t know where a sentence is supposed to come to an end, that is, where the proper boundaries of a sentence are. Since a sentence is a basic unit of thought, this is pretty important!

Part One: Run-Ons
Go to the section on Run-on Sentences in the Guide to Grammar & Writing (http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/runons.htm) and view the PowerPoint & information on that page. Answer the following questions & see additional hints below:

What are they?
1. True or False: Really long sentences of more than five lines are definitely run-ons.

2. Run-ons contain two or more __________________________ clauses.
   (REVIEW: This kind of clause contains a subject and a verb that together form a complete thought; therefore, each one can stand alone as a separate sentence.)

3. A comma splice connects two __________________________ clauses with _________ a comma.

How can I find them?
4. What are three common “run-on traps”?
   a. When a __________________________ in the second clause refers to a _ __________________________ in the first clause.
   b. When a __________________________ or directive occurs in the second clause.
   c. When two clauses are connected by a __________________________ expression.
HINT: Try reading one sentence at a time, starting with the last sentence and moving backward through your paper. If you think you've got a run-on, try the MAGIC FINGER METHOD! Place your finger where you think one sentence ends and the next begins. Then make sure there's a complete thought on each side of the finger. If so, you may have a run-on. Use one of the methods below to correct it!

How can I fix them?
5. We can insert a ________________ and start a new ________________
   ________________.
6. We can insert a comma plus a ________________ conjunction.
   HINT: It helps to remember these as FANBOYS.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For</th>
<th>And</th>
<th>Nor</th>
<th>But</th>
<th>Or</th>
<th>Yet</th>
<th>So</th>
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</thead>
</table>
   a. comma by itself  
   b. semicolon by itself (or followed by a transition word and comma)  
   c. hyphen between two words  
   d. dash where the first idea ends  
   e. exclamation point where the first idea ends

HINT: Sometimes, you just have to rewrite the sentence completely!

You may skip ahead to #9 (the quiz on run-ons) or review fragments first.

Part Two: Fragments
Go to the section on Fragments in the Guide to Grammar & Writing (http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/fragments.htm) and view the PowerPoint & information on that page. Answer the following questions & see additional hints below:

What are they?
8. A sentence fragment fails to be a complete sentence because it is missing a subject and/or a ________________ or part of a verb string, or it may have a dependent clause containing a subject and verb but still no ____________
   ________________________________ clause.
How can I find them?

HINT: Try reading backwards again. If you think you’ve found a fragment, look for an independent clause, complete with subject and verb. Sometimes, it helps to place the words “I realized that...” in front of the sentence and read it aloud, since only a complete thought will make sense after that phrase. (This works much of the time, but not always.) If you do indeed have a fragment, use one of the methods below to correct it!

How can I fix them?

Since a sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence, just add what’s missing!

- If it needs a subject, add a subject.
- If it needs a verb or part of a verb phrase, add the missing verbs.
- If it needs a whole independent clause to finish the thought, add that!

Caution! Often you can add the fragment to a nearby sentence, kind of like gluing the handle back on a coffee cup after you broke it, or like reuniting a lost child with its parents. But make sure they belong together. If not, correct the sentence fragment by making it independent on its own.

You may want to stop here and check your work with a tutor or instructor before moving on. If you feel confident, do #9 & 10 and then ask a tutor or instructor questions before moving on to #11.

Part Three: Practice

9. Take the quiz titled “Avoiding Comma Splices” at the bottom of the run-ons page and print out both your version and “Grammar's Version.” Since there is often more than one acceptable way to correct a run-on, have a tutor or instructor on duty check your corrections.

10. Take the quiz titled “Repairing Sentence Fragments” at the bottom of the fragments page and print out both your version and “Grammar's Version.” Since there is often more than one acceptable way to correct a fragment, have a tutor or instructor on duty check your corrections.

11. Take the quiz titled “Fragments & Run-Ons” at the bottom of either the run-on or fragments page (It’s the same!). Print out the quiz with your name and class after it has been graded by the computer. Discuss any wrong answers with a tutor or instructor on duty.

12. Turn in this completed answer sheet with a signature or confirmation sheet and the three quizzes stapled to the back.

Tutor/Instructor Signature

Date

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