Common Sentence Problems
Run-on or Fused Sentences,
Comma Splices, and Sentence Fragments


Run-on or Fused Sentences
A run-on or fused sentence is the result of joining two independent clauses without using punctuation or a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so). Run-on sentences are usually corrected in one of the following ways:

• Form two separate sentences by adding a period between the two independent clauses
• Add a comma before the coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so)
• Add a semicolon between the two independent clauses
• Change the comma to a semicolon and add a conjunctive adverb
• Subordinate one of the independent clauses

Incorrect: William Shakespeare lived in London he wrote Romeo and Juliet. (Run-on or fused sentence)
Correct: William Shakespeare lived in London. He wrote Romeo and Juliet.
William Shakespeare lived in London, and he wrote Romeo and Juliet.
William Shakespeare lived in London; he wrote Romeo and Juliet.
William Shakespeare lived in London; additionally, he wrote Romeo and Juliet.
William Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet while he lived in London.

Comma Splices
A comma splice is the result of joining two independent clauses incorrectly with a comma only. Comma splices usually can be corrected in one of the following ways:

• Form two separate sentences by changing the comma to a period
• Add a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so) after the comma
• Replace the comma with a semicolon
• Change the comma to a semicolon and add a conjunctive adverb
• Subordinate one of the independent clauses

Incorrect: I enjoyed the movie, it was very entertaining. (Comma splice)
Correct: I enjoyed the movie. It was very entertaining.
I enjoyed the movie, and it was very entertaining.
I enjoyed the movie; moreover, it was very entertaining.
I enjoyed the movie because it was very entertaining.

Sentence Fragments
A sentence fragment is a group of words that is punctuated as if it were a complete sentence but is grammatically incomplete because it lacks a subject or a predicate or begins with a subordinating clause. A sentence fragment lacks a complete thought. Sentence fragments can usually be corrected in one of the following ways:

• Add the missing phrase or words
• Attach the sentence fragment to the preceding sentence if the fragment agrees with the context of the preceding sentence.

Incorrect: Fits perfectly! (No subject)
Correct: The dress fits perfectly! (Sentence)

Incorrect: The white dog. (No verb)
Correct: The white dog is covered in mud. (Sentence)

Incorrect: That I found in the hall. (Subordinate clause)
Correct: The hat that I found in the hall was blue. (Sentence)

Incorrect: The dress I am wearing to the ball is red. Fits perfectly! (A sentence and a fragment)
Correct: The red dress I am wearing to the ball fits perfectly. (Fits perfectly! is integrated into the preceding sentence.)