Yuba College Writing & Language Development Center

Run On Sentences & Comma Splices

Run on sentences are independent clauses that have not been either separated or joined using correct punctuation. You may always use periods to *separate* independent clauses. However, you have limited options when you join independent clauses: 1) You may use a semicolon or 2) a comma with a coordinating conjunction. Joining independent clauses is called coordination; it creates *compound* sentences where the clauses are considered of equal importance.

You may *not* use a comma alone to join independent clauses. To correct this error (a comma splice), you can use one of the two allowable options above. An alternative way to correct a run on is called subordination. Subordination creates *complex* sentences with an independent clause that is considered more important and a subordinate (also called dependent) clause that is considered secondary.

This is a run on…	…because….	This is correctly joined with coordination.	This is correctly joined with subordination.	This is correctly separated.
Vang was tired he decided to stay home.	It joins two independent clauses without *any* punctuation.	Vang was tired, so he decided to stay home. *or* Vang was tired; he decided to stay home.	Because Vang was tired, he decided to stay home. *or* Vang decided to stay home because he was tired.	Vang was tired. He decided to stay home.
Nuclear waste is hazardous, this is indisputable.	It joins two independent clauses with the *wrong* punctuation.	Nuclear waste is hazardous; this is indisputable. *or* Nuclear waste is hazardous, and this is indisputable.	*(These clauses are intended to have equal importance, so subordination would not make sense.)*	Nuclear waste is hazardous. Indeed, this is indisputable.
John added biology to his schedule, he was worried about the homework.	It joins two independent clauses with the *wrong* punctuation	John added biology to his schedule, but he was worried about the homework. *or* John added biology to his schedule; however, he was worried about the homework.	John added biology to his schedule although he was worried about the homework. *or* Although John was worried about the homework, he added biology to his schedule.	John added biology to his schedule. However, he was worried about the homework.
Shoua hopes to move to Napa, her family lives there.	It joins two independent clauses with the *wrong* punctuation.	Shoua hopes to move to Napa, for her family lives there. *or* Shoua hopes to move to Napa; her family lives there.	Shoua hopes to move to Napa, where her family lives. *or* Shoua hopes to move to Napa since her family lives there.	Shoua hopes to move to Napa. Her family lives there.

Contributed by Rosemary McKeever