

# FINDING AND FIXING RUN-ON SENTENCE ERRORS

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## What's a Run-On Sentence Error?

There are two main types of run-on sentence errors: comma splices and fused sentences.

A **Comma Splice Run-On Error** occurs when 2 complete sentences or independent clauses are **linked together with only a comma between them**. Commas are not strong enough to hold 2 independent clauses together on their own. When we combine 2 complete sentences, or 2 complete ideas in one sentence, we need to use additional words or punctuation in order to show specific relationships between the 2 sentences.

A **Fused Sentence Run-On Error** occurs when 2 complete sentences or independent clauses are linked together **without any punctuation at all**. It's hard for readers to see where one idea ends and another begins.

### TIPBOX

#### The Imaginary Period

If you suspect a sentence is a run-on, place an Imaginary Period between the two suspected independent clauses. If each clause contains a subject and verb and each can stand alone as a complete thought, then you have a run-on error.

Applying the Imaginary Period tip reveals which of the sentences below are comma splice run-ons and which are fused sentence run-ons. We mark them with **fs** (fused sentence) or **cs** (comma splice).

I won the lottery[.] I quit my job. (Each thought is an independent clause)

I won the lottery, I quit my job. (cs)

I won the lottery I quit my job. (fs)

## How Do I Fix a Run-On Sentence Error?

There are 5 ways to repair run-on errors.

### Option 1: Make 2 complete sentences

I won the lottery. I quit my job.

**Option 2: Coordination. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction to combine 2 independent clauses**

**FANBOYS = for / and / nor / but / or / yet / so**

I quit my job, **for** I won the lottery.  
I won the lottery, **and** I quit my job.  
I did not win the lottery, **nor** did I quit my job.  
I won the lottery, **but** I did not quit my job.  
I will win the lottery, **or** I will quit my job.  
I won the lottery, **yet** I don't know if I will quit my job.  
I won the lottery, **so** I quit my job.

**Option 3: Use a semicolon (;) to combine 2 independent clauses**

I won the lottery; I quit my job.

**Option 4: To combine 2 independent clauses, use a semicolon + a transition word + a comma**

I won the lottery; **as a result**, I quit my job.

Additional transition words to use with a ; to link independent clauses:

To Add Information	To Illustrate Ideas	To Show Contrast	To Show Cause/Effect
Again	For example	However	Accordingly
In addition	For instance	Instead	Consequently
Besides/also	In fact	Nevertheless	Subsequently
Furthermore	Namely	Nonetheless	Therefore
Likewise		Otherwise	Thus
Moreover		Still	

**Option 5: Subordination. Make one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause**

**Because I won the lottery**, I quit my job.

Putting "Because" before the "I won the lottery" and keeping that clause at the beginning of the sentence makes a dependent, introductory clause—you **always** use a comma following a dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence.

I quit my job **because I won the lottery**.

No comma is needed if a dependent (subordinate) clause is placed *after* an independent clause.

Additional words to use to create subordination/dependent clauses:

Time	Place	Cause	Condition	Contrast
When	Where	Because	If	Although
While	Wherever	Since	Unless	Even though
Since		Now that		Despite
Before/after				In spite of
Until				

### Sentence Practice

Please underline and correct any run-on errors in these sentences:

1. Studying history is important, people need to know about the past in order to better understand the present.
2. Geography class taught me to identify the location of countries I learned a lot about the culture, language, and history of many places I have never been.
3. My sister told me I should meet her in New York in May, she will be starring in a play.
4. I recently took a cooking class we cooked yakisoba and made sushi I loved all of it!
5. I hope my future job will involve a lot of travel I want to visit every continent at least twice.

### Paragraph Practice

Please underline and correct the 5 run-on errors in the paragraph below using the strategies explained above:

*American Idol* has impacted people all around the globe it made everyone who watched believe they had real talent. Many hopeful contestants were shocked when they were not selected to compete on the real show. Some of them threw tantrums they screamed and yelled at the judges. This was embarrassing, but it was often funny to watch. Their behavior demonstrates the way popular culture impacts the goals of young people there is a negative effect. Author Terry Golway says teenagers used to aspire to important professional jobs such

as “engineers, mathematicians, scientists, and systems analysts” (331). He claims that now young people just want to become famous for being pop culture icons he thinks this is a dangerous change. This desperate desire for fame explains why some people react so strangely when rejected on *American Idol*, they see it as their only option for the future. (5 errors)

### For More Practice

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University has several resources—try them out!

- [Identifying Independent and Dependent Clauses](#)  
(click the link above or go to [owl.purdue.edu/owl](http://owl.purdue.edu/owl), click on **General Writing**, then **Punctuation**, then select **Independent and Dependent Clauses**, and then **Independent and Dependent Clauses** once more)
- [Run-Ons, Comma Splices, and Fused Sentences](#)  
(click the link above or go to [owl.purdue.edu/owl](http://owl.purdue.edu/owl), click on **General Writing**, then **Punctuation**, then select **Independent and Dependent Clauses**, and then **Run On Sentences**)
- [Comma Exercises](#)  
(click the link above or go to [owl.purdue.edu/owl\\_exercises](http://owl.purdue.edu/owl_exercises), click on **Punctuation Exercises**, select **Commas**, and choose **Commas Index**—you can do any/all of the exercises you like!)