

RUN-ONS, COMMA SPLICES, AND FRAGMENTS

Proper sentence structure improves the clarity and overall quality of your writing. The main unit of a sentence is an **independent clause**, which contains at least one subject and one verb and can stand alone as a complete thought. Incorrectly formed or combined independent clauses can result in run-on sentences, comma splices, and sentence fragments.

Dependent clauses contain both a subject and a verb but would not make sense on their own. Dependent clauses must be accompanied by an independent clause to make a proper sentence.

IDENTIFYING ERRORS IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE

1. **Run-on sentences** occur when two independent clauses are written together without being properly connected.
 - a. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful* the birds chirped happily from the trees.
2. **Comma splices** happen when two independent clauses are joined only by a comma.
 - a. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam,* they wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.
3. **Sentence fragments** are sentences that only have a dependent clause or lack a subject or verb in a clause.
 - a. Since the weather is quite atrocious today.
 - b. The ambulance, which sped down the highway as its sirens blared.

CORRECTING ERRORS IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE

1. **Run-on sentences** can be corrected by adding a comma with a conjunction, connecting the two sentences with a semicolon, or dividing them into two sentences and adding ending punctuation.
 - a. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful,* and the birds chirped happily from the trees.

- b. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful; the birds chirped happily from the trees.*
- c. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful. The birds chirped happily from the trees.*
2. **Comma splices** can be corrected by adding a conjunction before the comma or by replacing the comma with ending punctuation or a semicolon where the two independent clauses meet.
- a. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam, and they wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.*
- b. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam; they wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.*
- c. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam. They wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.*
3. **Sentence fragments** can be fixed by transforming a dependent clause into an independent clause or by simply adding an independent clause. If a clause is missing a subject or verb, that element can be added to complete the sentence.
- a. **Dependent Clause:** Since the weather is quite atrocious today.
- i. The weather is quite atrocious today.
- ii. Since the weather is quite atrocious today, we decided to stay inside.
- b. **Lacks Verb:** The ambulance, which sped down the highway as its sirens blared.
- i. The ambulance, which sped down the highway as its sirens blared, arrived at the scene of the accident on time.
- ii. The ambulance sped down the highway as its sirens blared.

PRACTICE NOW