

2. Run-Together Sentences

Run-together sentences occur when two sentences are joined with no punctuation between them or with only a comma connecting them (comma splices).

Examples of run-together sentences:

It was raining I got wet.

It was raining, I got wet.

Even though these thoughts go together logically, they are two separate sentences grammatically. A sentence can have two subjects and two verbs only if they are joined in some way. This unit explains some of the ways to join sentences.

Suggestions for fixing run-together sentences

Use a coordinator:

If the two sentences go together logically, often you should use a joining word to indicate the logical connection. This helps your reader to understand how your ideas relate to each other. One way of showing how the sentences are related is to join them with coordinators (remember them with the acronym **FANBOYS**):

For (cause)
And (addition)
Nor (addition of negatives)
But (opposition)
Or (alternatives)
Yet (opposition--same as but)
So (result)

Corrected run-together sentence: It was raining, so I got wet.

****Notice that a comma comes before the coordinator.

Proofreading Tips

- a) Read your essay out loud after you have printed it out. Often, you can catch run-together sentences by hearing where you pause. Native speakers have an innate sense of when one sentence ends and another begins. When you reach the end of a sentence you will naturally pause, your voice lowers and then raises when you start the new sentence.
- b) If run-together sentences continue to be a problem for you, try circling every comma in your essay (or have the computer search out the commas for you). Then check to see if you have a sentence (with both subject and verb) both before and after the comma. If you do, you will need to fix it by joining the sentences with a coordinator, subordinator or semicolon or by separating them with a period.

Exercise 1

In the exercise below, **use one of the seven coordinators (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)** to join the sentences.

DO NOT REWRITE THE WHOLE SENTENCE. JUST FIX THE PROBLEM

Example: I hate to see animals in cages, I don't like to go to the zoo.

Correct: I hate to see animals in cages, **so** I don't like to go to the zoo.

1. Nick and Fran enjoyed the movie, they wished the seats had been more comfortable.
2. The TV wasn't working, I walked over to a friend's house to watch the game.
3. Fred remembered to get the hot dogs he forgot to buy the rolls.
4. The telephone was ringing, someone was at the front door as well.
5. Brett moved from Boston to Los Angeles, she wanted to get as far away as possible from her ex-husband.
6. On sunny days, I like to ride my bike in the park, I take a walk on the beach.
7. There were not that many good jobs on campus, I took one at the mall.
8. Most of the class thought the main character was mean, I thought he was misunderstood.

Use a Subordinator

You can also show the relationship between two sentences by using a **subordinator** to change one of the sentences into a dependent clause.

Corrected run-together sentences: *Since* it was raining, I got wet.

I got wet *because* it was raining.

**** When a subordinator comes in the beginning of a sentence, put a comma after the clause it is attached to. If the subordinator comes in the middle of the sentence, do not use a comma.

While there are too many subordinators to list, here are some common ones:

Time words:	after, before, since, when, while, as, whenever, until, by the time, as soon as, until, as long as,
Cause-effect words:	because, since, as
Opposition words:	while, whereas, although, though, even though
Condition words:	if, unless, even if, whether

DO NOT REWRITE THE WHOLE SENTENCE. JUST FIX THE PROBLEM

Exercise 3

Insert a semicolon where the sentences run together.

1. The tide had risen three feet by nightfall, waves began to lap across the top of the pier.
2. Something was obviously wrong with the meatloaf, it was glowing in the dark.
3. Mike never heard the third-base coach screaming for him to stop he was out at home plate by ten feet.
4. Our manager proposed a ten percent reduction in salaries the staff did not like the idea.
5. I was happy with my new apartment, it was in a good location and the rent was very low.

A final note on run-together sentences:

Beware: Transition words like *however, then, therefore, moreover, for example*, **DO NOT join sentences**. You still need a semicolon or a period if you use them between sentences.

Incorrect: It was raining therefore I got wet.

Correct: It was raining; therefore, I got wet.

It was raining. Therefore, I got wet.

The problems with transition words are that you have to remember to use a semi-colon or a period between sentences and that they are over-used and clunky. Frequently, you can use a coordinator to mean the same thing and to connect your ideas more smoothly. Try using *but* instead of *however*, so instead of *therefore* or *then*, and *and* instead of *moreover*.

Exercise 4

Correct the following run-together sentences below. Here are the most common ways to correct them:

Example of a run-together sentence: I ran all the way to the comer, I still missed my bus.

Best choice: I ran all the way to the comer, but I still missed my bus.

Although I ran all the way to the comer, I still missed my bus.

Using a **joining word** is the best choice because it lets your reader know the logical connection between your two sentences. In this case, the logical connection is opposition.

Alternative choice: I ran all the way to the corner; I still missed my bus. Only use a semicolon when you cannot find a joining word that works.

Least preferable choice: I ran all the way to the corner. I still missed my bus. By using a period, you are giving your reader even less information about how the sentences relate.

1. The Navajos are a nomadic people, the Hopis are farmers.
2. Despite my father's plans for me, I didn't want to study medicine, I wanted to become a teacher.
3. Elaine was very ill, she missed three days of class.
4. The Student Union doesn't have enough tables, many students are forced to eat outside.
5. Bishop Tutu spoke about the problems in South Africa, he stressed the need for speedy solutions to those problems.
6. The book has been on the best-seller list for months, it's one of the most boring novels I've ever read.
7. In an earthquake, buildings sway back and forth, many rattle and groan.

Exercise 5

Using the directions from exercise 4, correct the following run-together sentences.

1. Billie Holliday was one of the greatest jazz singers of all time, she captivated audiences wherever she went.
2. Mark is not very interested in sports, he does, however, like to water-ski.
3. My living room is very small, I should not buy any more furniture.
4. Some students graduate from high school without having learned much of anything, nobody knows exactly whose fault this is.
5. Dedicated ecologists do not kill wildlife, they shoot with cameras instead of guns.
6. Some people are very considerate, others think of nobody but themselves.
7. I can't wait for my mid-terms to be over, then I can finally get some sleep.
8. Jean is my best friend, she is always there for me when I need her.
9. She is not only an excellent student, she is also an outstanding athlete.
10. The room was filthy, empty beer cans and half-eaten food were scattered all over the floor.

Exercise 6

Now that you have fixed some run-togethers in isolated sentences, see if you can find the run-togethers in this paragraph. Correct any you find using the directions from exercise 4. If you have difficulty, try reading the passage out loud.

Sleep is a subject we should all know a lot about, we spend one third of our lives sleeping. Even though everyone sleeps, scientists have only recently begun to understand what goes on when we sleep. They used to believe that the body repairs itself while asleep, there is some truth to this but the body also does this while awake. The brain does not simply shut itself off at night, it goes through a complicated series of chemical changes. Scientists have begun to chart these changes, working with complex instruments that measure brain-wave patterns. They have found that we do not move smoothly from being awake to being asleep, we pass through a cycle of four sleep stages. At each stage blood pressure and pulse rate drop, the body temperature also goes down. In the second stage the number and length of brain waves go up, while the sleeper's eyes begin to move rapidly back and forth behind their lids. Scientists call this activity rapid eye movements, or REMs, the activity that accompanies most of our dreaming. If a person is deprived of REM sleep, that person will soon become bad-tempered and irritable. A full night's sleep is not a single, unbroken state but consists of four or five of these multi-stage sleep cycles.

Exercise 7

Some of the sentences in this paragraph are run-togethers. Review the information in this chapter and correct any run-together sentences that you find.

In 1867, a chef at a hotel in Saratoga Springs accidentally dropped some thinly sliced potatoes into hot cooking oil, instantly the world found a new delicacy: the potato chip. At the time, Saratoga Springs was America's most fashionable resort, fads that started there usually found immediate success. Almost overnight, the potato chip became Saratoga's hottest item. The wide, tree-lined avenues were filled with people eating potato chips, the huge veranda of the United States Hotel was no different; it was filled with chip-eaters too. Some of the richest, most powerful people in the world consumed them regularly, for instance, the Vanderbilts could often be seen daintily plucking chips from paper cups on their stroll back to their mansion. The elegant "Saratoga chips" remained the delicacy of the wealthy until 1925, when the first chip factory was constructed in Albany, New York. The potato chip was no longer the snack of only the rich and famous, it became a common household item. Of course potato chips have changed a great deal in the last hundred years, now they come in various textures and flavors, some even come stacked in paper tubes! Still, the next time you grab a handful of greasy, flavor-dusted chips, you might pause to remember the noble origins of that humble food. It might be the closest you'll ever get to living like the Vanderbilts, you'd better enjoy it!