A run-on sentence occurs when two or more main thoughts run together without correct punctuation. Writing run-on sentences is a common writing error.

1. How To Find Run-ons: Listen to the Words!

   a. Read each sentence aloud slowly. Listen for clues to where a sentence might end:
      - If your voice stops and drops, probably a period is needed.
      - If your voice raises, try a question mark.
      - If your voice expresses strong emotion, try an exclamation mark.
      - Remember to begin new sentences with a capital letter.

   Try the sentences below. Read each one aloud and see if you can put in the correct end punctuation:
      - My boss never answers the phone he always waits for me to do it.
      - We rushed out for lunch then we walked 10 blocks to a restaurant.
      - I waited for my tax refund for several months, finally it came.

2. How To Find Run-ons: Look for the Troublesome Words!

   a. Certain words are often responsible for run-on sentences. If one of these words starts a complete thought, use an end mark before it:
      
      | then   | finally | usually |
      | here   | therefore | soon    |
      | consequently |

   b. Run-on: I waited a long time, finally she arrived.
      Correct: I waited a long time. Finally she arrived.
      Run-on: He laughed loudly then he covered his mouth.
      Correct: He laughed loudly. Then he covered his mouth.
      Run-on: We tried to catch the bus, however, we left too late.
      Correct: We tried to catch the bus. However, we left too late.
      Run-on: The car went out of control, there was nothing he could do.
      Correct: The car went out of control. There was nothing he could do.

3. How To Find Run-ons: Watch for Pronouns!

   a. Another common mistake is a run-on error with one of these pronouns: it, we, I, he, she, you, they.
      If you slowly read aloud the run-on sentences below, you will see that in each run-on a complete thought ends just before the italicized pronoun.

   b. Run-on: We reached the tall building it was still closed.
      Correct: We reached the tall building. It was still closed.
      Run-on: My two brothers work at the Mall they are saving up for a car.
      Correct: My two brothers work at the Mall. They are saving up for a car.
      Run-on: The umbrella wouldn't open we got drenched walking to the store.
      Correct: The umbrella wouldn't open. We got drenched walking to the store.

      Reminder: Whenever you use one of the pronouns listed above, stop for a moment. Does the word start a complete thought? Does your voice stop and drop before it? If so, use a period and start the pronoun with a capital letter.

(Please continue on the back)
**Try these:**

**Run-on:** Don't be late for the opening, it is a wonderful show.
**Correct:**

**Run-on:** Mr. Nisket is very friendly he always has a smile for me.
**Correct:**

**Run-on:** Everyone needs a diet full of vitamins, they are very important to our health.
**Correct:**

**Run-on:** We arrived at the store at 9:00, it had not yet opened.
**Correct:**

**Run-on:** I was hoping you would come to the party I haven't seen you for such a long time.
**Correct:**

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**4. How To Find Run-ons: Watch for COMMAS!**

a. A comma in NOT an end mark. Used alone, it cannot separate two sentences. When writers incorrectly use it that way, the run-on sentence is called a "comma splice." It can be corrected with a period instead of the comma, or, sometimes, with a semi-colon instead of a comma. (See #5 below, too.)

**Comma splice:** The book was very long, he was unable to finish it.
**Correct:** The book was very long. He was unable to finish it.

**Comma splice:** Joan reads very quickly, she also reads a lot.
**Correct:** Joan reads very quickly; she also reads a lot.

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**5. How To FIX Run-ons: Two Other Ways**

a. When two complete thoughts are very closely related in meaning, you can use a **semicolon** to connect them.

**Run-on:** We tried to catch the bus, however, we left too late.
**Correct:** We tried to catch the bus; however, we left too late.

**Run-on:** She laughed loudly, then she covered her mouth.
**Correct:** She laughed loudly; then she covered her mouth.

**Run-on:** The camera broke, consequently, no wedding pictures are available.
**Correct:** The camera broke; consequently, no wedding pictures are available.

b. If the two run-on word groups are equal in importance, you can also join two run-ons by using one of these **connectors:** and, but, for, or, nor, yet. When you use one of these connectors to fix a run-on, use a **comma** before it.

**Run-on:** We tried to catch the bus, however, we left too late.
**Correct:** We tried to catch the bus, **but** we left too late.

**Run-on:** The camera broke, we couldn't take any pictures.
**Correct:** The camera broke, and we couldn't take any pictures.

**Run-on:** You can have the extra cake, it's your birthday.
**Correct:** You can have the extra cake, for it's your birthday.