

Run-on Sentences

Academic Skills Center Room 1501 Shoreline Community College

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	here	consequently
finally	there	therefore
usually	soon	however

- 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: _____

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

- a. A comma is 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.**

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.**