

MY TEACHER SAYS I HAVE Run-ons, Fused Sentences, and Comma Splices! WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?!

According to Purdue OWL, “**Run-ons, comma splices, and fused sentences** are all names given to compound sentences that are not punctuated correctly.”

In general, a **comma splice** happens when you are combining two independent clauses (complete sentences) together with a comma. (The comma is not sufficient to do this by itself.)

Examples of comma splices:

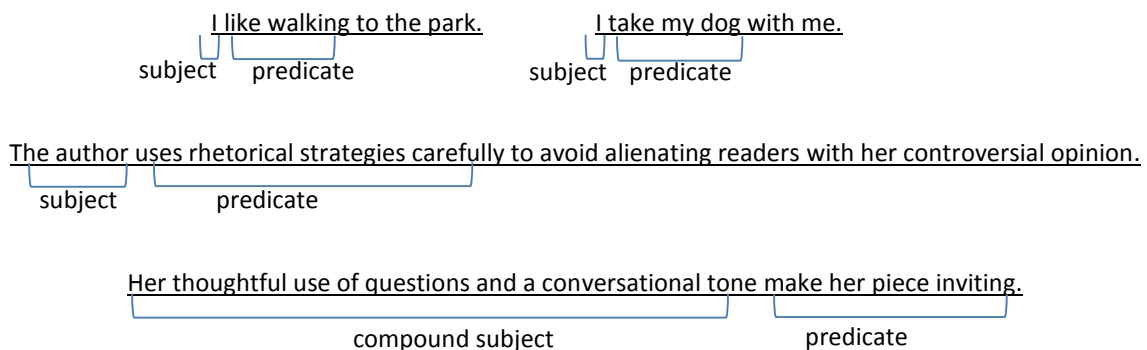
- * I like walking to the park, I take my dog with me.
- * The author uses rhetorical strategies carefully to avoid alienating readers with her controversial opinion, her thoughtful use of questions and a conversational tone make her piece inviting.

When there is no punctuation to separate these independent clauses (complete sentences), then it’s called a **run-on or fused sentence**.

Examples of run-on/ fused sentences:

- * I like walking to the park I take my dog with me.
- * The author uses rhetorical strategies carefully to avoid alienating readers with her controversial opinion her thoughtful use of questions and a conversational tone make her piece inviting.

Notice the two independent clauses (complete sentences) in each example:



Complete sentences require a subject (usually a noun, sometimes a pronoun, that is the “actor” in the sentence) and a predicate (a verb or “action” and its objects that modify the subject).
Because these make sense if you say them alone and include the necessary subject and verb sentence parts, you know they are complete.
This is one way you can decide if you have a run-on or comma splice.

A common misunderstanding:

“Run-ons are just LONG sentences.”

Not necessarily! Some are quite short. Remember, long sentences are not always bad. It’s when they’re not punctuated correctly that they become a problem.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Punctuate correctly!

*In writing, you always have options. Choose the one that best fits your writing style.
Consider context and audience to make the best choice.*

You can change your sentences using one or more of these tricks:

1

Add a period (.) or semicolon (;)

This is the simplest and quickest way to fix a run-on, a fused sentence, or a comma splice.

Examples:

- * I like walking to the park. I take my dog with me.
- * The author uses rhetorical strategies carefully to avoid alienating readers with her controversial opinion. Her thoughtful use of questions and a conversational tone make her piece inviting.
- OR
- * I like walking to the park; I take my dog with me.
- * The author uses rhetorical strategies carefully to avoid alienating readers with her controversial opinion; her thoughtful use of questions and a conversational tone make her piece inviting.

Remember, when using the semicolon (;), the two clauses must relate.

2

Use a comma with a conjunction (,)

Use a conjunction like *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so* following a comma.

Examples:

- * I like walking to the park, so I take my dog with me.
- * The author uses rhetorical strategies carefully to avoid alienating readers with her controversial opinion, and her thoughtful use of questions and a conversational tone make her piece inviting.

Don't forget about context. Some conjunctions will work better than others.

3

Rewrite the sentence

Sometimes it's best to reword it. Remember that a complete sentence needs a subject (usually a noun, sometimes a pronoun) and a predicate (action/verb phrase).

Example:

- * I took my dog to the park for a walk.
- * The author carefully uses rhetorical strategies, such as questions and tone, to invite readers to consider her controversial opinion.

PRACTICE EXERCISES:

1. Insert a period or semicolon to correct this run-on:

The use of lighting and music in film are crucial to the overall impact of a movie these elements are as important as the actors and script to movie-goers' experiences.

2. Add a conjunction to correct this comma splice:

While some critics may disagree, the plot of the movie seemed unoriginal, theater-goers should not waste their time seeing it.

3. Rewrite the above sentences to avoid the run-on and comma splice.

Possible answers:
1. The use of lighting and music in film are crucial to the overall impact of a movie; these elements are as important as the actors and script to movie-goers experience.
2. While some critics may disagree, the plot of the movie seemed unoriginal, so theater-goers should not waste their time seeing it.
3.1. A film's lighting and music are as crucial as the actors and script to movie-goers' experiences.
3.2. Theater-goers should not waste their time seeing a movie with such an unoriginal plot.