Avoid **run-ons** and **comma splices** because they are grammatically incorrect, change the meaning of sentences, and can be easily misread by the reader and cause confusion.

A **run-on** is a sentence made of two or more independent clauses that are run together with no punctuation separating them. For example,

I got rhythm who could ask for anything more?

Notice that one independent clause is a statement, but the second is a question, yet they’re pushed together like a single sentence. This is a run-on.

Another type of run-on called a **comma splice** also contains two or more independent clauses, but it’s different—though still incorrect—since it has a only a comma between the independent clauses. For example,

Patrick is SpongeBob’s best friend, they always eat at the Crusty Crab.

A comma alone isn’t a legitimate way to join two independent clauses.

**Correcting Run-ons and Comma Splices**

Run-ons and comma splices are fundamental errors in sentence structure and need to be fixed. Correct run-ons and comma splices in five different ways:

1. Use a period to create two sentences.
2. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.
3. Use a semicolon.
4. Use a subordinating conjunction.
5. Use a conjunctive adverb.

**Method #1—Use a period**

Place a period after the first independent clause.

*Run-on:* The female black widow has a bad reputation she has been known to eat her partner after mating.

*Correction:* The female black widow has a bad reputation. She has been known to eat her partner after mating.

**Method #2—Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction**

Place a comma and a coordinating conjunction after the first independent clause.

*Note:* Coordinating conjunctions are the FANBOYS: *For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet,* and *So.*

*Run-on:* The Grinch felt angry and rejected he decided to steal Christmas.

*Correction:* The Grinch felt angry and rejected, **so** he decided to steal Christmas.
Method #3—Use a semicolon
Place only a semicolon between the two independent clauses if the logical connection between them is clear without any language, such as a conjunction or conjunctive adverb.

Comma splice: Education is a great investment, it can never be taken away.
Correction: Education is a great investment; it can never be taken away.

Since “it” in the second independent clause obviously refers to “Education” in the first, the logical connection between the two sentences is clear; therefore, a semicolon is sufficient to make the connection for the reader.

Method #4—Use a subordinating conjunction
Subordinating conjunctions—words such as although, because, since, unless, until, if, when, after, before, while, etc.—can be placed before either independent clause, depending on the meaning intended.

Run-on: Survivor must be a popular show it won the Viewers’ Choice Award for best reality series.
Correction: Survivor must be a popular show since it won the Viewers’ Choice Award for best reality series.

Or
Correction: Because Survivor won the Viewers’ Choice Award for best reality series, it must be a popular show.

Method #5—Use a conjunctive adverb
Common conjunctive adverbs include however, therefore, on the other hand, in addition, for example, nevertheless, consequently, and as a result. When a conjunctive adverb is used to connect two independent clauses, put a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb and a comma after it.

Comma splice: Many people believe the Statue of Liberty was made in America, it was actually made in France.
Correction: Many people believe the Statue of Liberty was made in America; however, it was actually made in France.

Points to Remember
- Be sure to proofread your essays since Grammarcheck on computers won’t catch every run-on and comma splice.
- Read your draft aloud; you’re more likely to recognize a run-on or comma splice if you listen to your sentences.
- If you have questions, consult a handbook such as the fifth edition of A Writer’s Reference by Diana Hacker.
- See Writing Center “Sentence Variety” handouts for additional information on coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, semicolons, and conjunctive adverbs. You’ll find these in the kiosk and on our website at www.tamiu.edu/writingcenter/.
- You can also receive help from tutors at the Writing Center in BCH203.