



Finding and Fixing Run-On Sentences

What is a run-on sentence?

To understand what a run-on is, it is best to start with two independent sentences.

Ex. My professor reviewed my paper. He said it contained a lot of errors.

Both are complete sentences. Each one contains a subject and a verb. In addition, each one expresses a complete thought.

Run-ons occur when writers combine complete sentences without showing where one idea ends and the next begins.

Ex. My professor read my paper he said it contained a lot of errors.

This run-on is a **fused sentence**. Two complete sentences have been squashed together without showing the reader where one idea ends and the next one begins.

How can I find run-on sentences in my work?

Run-ons can be long or short. Since length is not a factor, students wonder how to tell if a sentence is a run-on. Fortunately, there is a test: **try to turn the sentence into a yes/no question**. If your sentence is a run-on, it will not be possible.

Ex. Did my professor read my paper he said it contained a lot of errors?

This does not make sense. You can only turn the sentence into a question if you divide it into two separate, complete ideas, like this:

Did my professor review my paper?

Did he say it contained a lot of errors?

Therefore, the fused sentence is a run-on. Sometimes, people try to correct run-ons by adding a comma, like this:

My professor read my paper, he said it contained a lot of errors.

This is still a run-on, but it is now called a **comma splice**. By itself, a comma is not enough to fix a run-on sentence.



How can I correct run-on sentences?

Consider the following run-on sentence:

INCORRECT: The weather should be great this weekend we should go camping.

This sentence can be corrected in five ways:

1. **Separate the complete sentences with a period and a capital letter.**

CORRECT: The weather should be great this weekend. We should go camping.

2. **Connect the two sentences using a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).**

CORRECT: The weather should be great this weekend, so we should go camping.

3. **Insert a semicolon between the two sentences.**

CORRECT: The weather should be great this weekend; we should go camping.

4. **Use a semicolon with a conjunctive adverb. NOTE: a comma should be placed after the conjunctive adverb (however, nevertheless, moreover, therefore, & etc.).**

CORRECT: The weather should be great this weekend; therefore, we should go camping.

5. **Use a subordinating conjunction to make one sentence a dependent clause.**

CORRECT: Because the weather should be great this weekend, we should go camping.

CORRECT: We should go camping because the weather should be great this weekend.

