Combining Sentences

When we join two complete statements (independent clauses) into a single sentence without correct punctuation, we create a run-on. Run-on sentences fall into one of two categories: fused sentences and comma splices. A fused sentence has two complete thoughts (independent clauses) with no punctuation between them. A comma splice has two complete thoughts separated only by a comma. A comma is not a strong enough punctuation mark to separate two independent clauses. Both the fused sentence and the comma splice incorrectly join two independent clauses.

**Fused Sentence:** The movie ended I went home.

**Comma Splice:** The movie ended, I went home.

You have four different options for correcting your run-together sentences.

1. Separate the two independent clauses with a period, and capitalize the next word.
2. Separate the two independent clauses with a comma, and add a coordinating conjunction (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so...FANBOYS**).
3. Separate the two independent clauses with a semicolon.
4. Change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction (such as **after, although, as, because, if, since, though, unless, until, or when**).

**Method 1: Use a Period**

Separate the two independent clauses with a period, and capitalize the next word.

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the sofa she had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa. **She** had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** I began to think about my brother. **I** felt good.

**Method 2: Use a Coordinating Conjunction**

Separate the two independent clauses with a comma, and add a coordinating conjunction (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so...FANBOYS**).

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the sofa she had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa, **for** she had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** I began to think about my brother, **so** I felt good.
Method 3: Use a Semicolon

Separate two closely related independent clauses with a semicolon.

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the sofa she had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa; she had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** I began to think about my brother; I felt good.

When you use a semicolon, you can also add a **conjunctive adverb**, a word or an expression that indicates how the two independent clauses in the sentence are related. A conjunctive adverb often makes the sentence smoother. It is placed after the semicolon and is followed by a comma.

She was lying on the sofa; in fact, she had just eaten lunch.

I began to think about my brother; consequently, I felt good.

Here are some conjunctive adverbs commonly used with semicolons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunctive Adverbs Used with a Semicolon Before and a Comma After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method 4: Create a Dependent Clause

Change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subordinating Conjunctions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
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<tr>
<td>until</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the sofa she had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa **because** she had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** When I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Hint:** If you put the dependent clause at the beginning of the sentence, add a comma between the two sentence parts (**except for although, though, and whereas, which require a comma either way**).