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.

Conjunctive Adverbs Used with a Semicolon Before and a Comma After			
also	for instance	in fact	of course
consequently	furthermore	instead	otherwise
finally	however	meanwhile	similarly
for example	in contrast	nevertheless	therefore
as a result	however	in addition	on the other hand

Method 4: Create a Dependent Clause

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

Subordinating Conjunctions			
after	although** though**	as (as if)	because
before	if	since	unless
until	when	whereas **	while

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)