

Spotting Problem Sentences

1. For the fragment, ask yourself: "If someone were to say or write this to me, would I expect the person to add to the statement or rephrase it?"
2. For the comma splice or run-together, ask yourself: "Is there a point in this word group at which I can insert a period and create a sentence on either side, without there being a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) at that point?"
3. If you have much trouble with comma splices and run-together, be suspicious about these constructions as you revise:
 - a. A comma preceded by a noun or pronoun followed by a noun or pronoun
 - b. A sentence beginning with a subordination conjunction (BATWASHTUB)
 - c. A sentence longer than fifteen words
4. If you have trouble with fragments, look for these clues:
 - a. A word group with a single verb ending in *-ing*
 - b. A word group without both a subject and verb
 - c. A sentence shorter than six words

Fragments

1. A correct sentence signals completeness; a **fragment** signals incompleteness--it doesn't make sense. You would expect the speaker of a fragment to say or write more or to rephrase it.
2. A **dependent clause** cannot stand by itself because it begins with a subordinating word.

Because he left.
When she worked.
Although they slept.

3. A **verbal phrase**, a **prepositional phrase**, and an **appositive phrase** may carry ideas, but each is incomplete because it lacks a subject and verb.

Verbal phrase: *having studied hard*
Sentence: Having studied hard, he expected to pass.
Prepositional phrase: *in the store*
Sentence: She worked in the store
Appositive phrase: *a successful business*

Sentence: Marks Brothers, a successful business, sells clothing.

4. Each complete sentence must have an **independent clause**, meaning a word or a group of words that contains a subject and a verb that can stand alone.

He enrolled for the fall semester.

Comma Splice and Run-Together

1. The **comma splice** (CS) consists of two independent clauses with only a comma between them.<![endif]>

The weather was bad, we canceled the picnic. (A comma by itself cannot join two independent clauses.)

2. The **run-together** (RT) differs from the comma splice in only one respect: it has no comma between the independent clauses.

The weather was bad we canceled the picnic. (Independent clauses must be properly connected.)

Correcting Comma Splices and Run-Togethers

1. Use a comma and a **coordinating conjunction** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) to correct the CS or RT.

The weather was bad, *and* we canceled the picnic.

2. Use a **subordinating conjunction** (such as because, after, that, when, although, since, how, till, unless, before) to make one clause dependent and correct the CS or RT.

Because the weather was bad, we canceled the picnic.

3. Use a **semicolon** (with or without a transitional word such as however, otherwise, therefore, similarly, hence, on the other hand, then, consequently, also, thus) to correct the CS or RT.

The weather was bad; therefore, we canceled the picnic.

or

The weather was bad; we canceled the picnic.

4. To correct the CS or RT, merely replace the comma with a period and add a capital letter (CS), or insert a period between the two independent clauses (RT) and add a capital letter.

The weather was bad. We canceled the picnic.