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*
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.

   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.