



The Writing Success Center

Getting Rid of Run-on Sentences

Any group of words having a subject and verb is a clause. The clause may be independent (able to stand alone) or dependent (unable to stand alone). If two independent clauses are written together with no punctuation, or merely a comma, they are called run-on sentence. For example:

The girls made the fire the boys cooked the steaks.
The girls made the fire, the boys cooked the steaks.
The book was interesting therefore I read it rapidly.
The book was interesting, therefore I read it rapidly.

Such run-on sentences can be corrected in one of three ways:

1. Make the two independent clauses into two sentences.

The girls made the fire. The boys cooked the steaks.
The book was interesting. Therefore I read it rapidly.

2. Separate the two independent clauses with a semicolon. Note the connecting words (underlined) that may come between independent clauses.

The girls made the fire; the boys cooked the steaks.
The book was interesting; therefore I read it rapidly.
I worked overtime; thus I finished my project early.
I was late; nevertheless I made the plane.
I will enjoy the work; furthermore I need the money.

Other words that may come between independent clauses are *however, likewise, moreover, otherwise*. All of these connecting words require a semicolon in front of them.

NOTE: Be sure that such words really do come between independent clauses. Sometimes they are merely interrupters as in the following sentences:

I decided, therefore, to paint the kitchen.
It took me weeks, however, to get started.

3. Connect the two independent clauses with a comma and one of the following connecting words: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. (You can remember these connecting words with the acronym FANBOYS!)

The girls made the fire, but the boys cooked the steaks.

The book was interesting, and I read it rapidly.

I must hurry, or I'll never finish.

I haven't seen that movie, nor do I want to.

He was not outgoing, yet I liked him.

THE THREE WAYS TO PUNCTUATE INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

The book was interesting. I read it rapidly.

The book was interesting; I read it rapidly

The book was interesting, and I read it rapidly.

Exercises

Most of the following sentences are run-on sentences. In each independent clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Then separate the two clauses with the correct punctuation: comma, semicolon, or period with a capital letter. If the sentence is NOT a run-on, put a check mark after the sentence.

Exercise 1

1. My high school adviser was close to me she was almost my best friend.
2. She was busy but she always made time for me.
3. Sometimes she would just sit and listen occasionally she would give advice.
4. At first I wasn't interested in her suggestion about a career then I changed my mind.
5. I hope to finish college in three more years then I'll apply for a job.
6. It is going to take time but eventually I should get a good position.
7. Some people can study with the stereo on I can't.
8. It isn't the easiest or best way to learn.

9. Each person does the best that he or she can under the circumstances but sometimes the circumstances are too difficult to overcome.

10. In education we need a balance between receiving and sending reading is receiving writing is sending.

Exercise 2

1. Last week I applied for part-time work at the hospital I went for an interview on Monday.

2. I was wearing my gray suit it is cut better than my tan one.

3. I had typed my application because I wanted to make a good impression.

4. I had just half an hour to get to the appointment and my car wouldn't start.

5. Luckily Jan had jumper cables and managed to start the car.

6. I got there on time I got the job.

7. The first step toward success is to learn to work work is more important than luck.

8. David Lloyd George said: "Don't be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps."

9. *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury is a collection of science fiction stories their theme is the colonization of Mars by mankind.

10. *I, Robot* by Isacc Asimov is a collection of short stories about the history of robots it seems them advancing from simple baby sitters and factory workers to the actual governing force of all mankind.