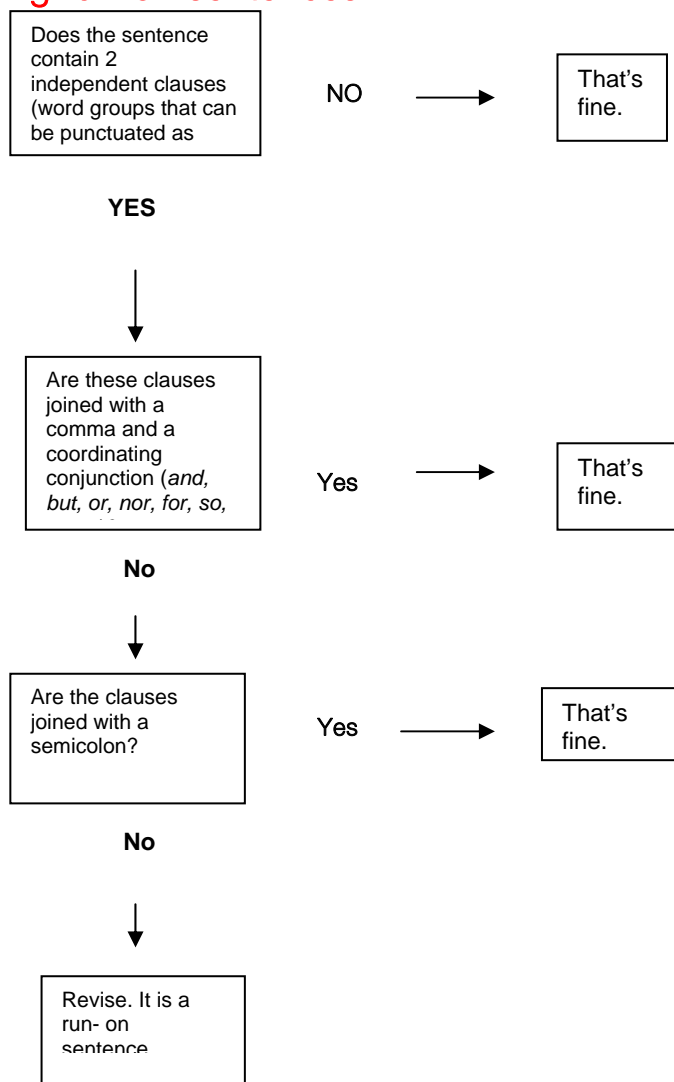


SENTENCE STRUCTURE: AVOIDING RUN-ON SENTENCES

Run-on sentences are sentences that join together as if they are only one sentence although they ought to have been written as two or even three sentences. They occur when you leave out the punctuation, use the wrong punctuation, or don't use an appropriate linking word. There are two types of run-on sentences: **fused sentences** and **comma splices**.

These sentence errors usually occur when you are concentrating on explaining complex ideas and aren't paying attention to the details of punctuation. Although the meaning is still expressed in your writing, when the sentences aren't broken up, it can become confusing for the reader because they don't receive any indication that a new point is being introduced. Therefore, you need to read carefully at the editing stage to avoid these sentence errors.

Recognising run-on sentences



Fused sentences

Fused sentences occur when two independent clauses (complete ideas or sentences) are put together without the correct punctuation or linking words to connect them.

For example: "Allowing countries to purchase emission permits from lesser polluters creates another area of economic competition it shies away from addressing the real need to reduce overall pollution."

Correcting fused sentences

There are a number of options for correcting fused sentences:

make the independent clauses into separate sentences, using a full stop and capital letter

- Allowing countries to purchase emission permits from lesser polluters creates another area of economic competition. It shies away from addressing the real need to reduce overall pollution.

insert a semicolon between the clauses

- Allowing countries to purchase emission permits from lesser polluters creates another area of economic competition; it shies away from addressing the real need to reduce overall pollution.

use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet)

- Allowing countries to purchase emission permits from lesser polluters creates another area of economic competition, and it shies away from addressing the real need to reduce overall pollution.

2. **change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause (incomplete idea), and link it to the main idea.** This is best done one of the ideas is not as important as the other and is better than changing only the punctuation, as it shows the relationships between the ideas.

- Allowing countries to purchase emission permits from lesser polluters creates another area of economic competition, rather than addressing the real need to reduce overall pollution.
or
- Even though allowing countries to purchase emission permits from lesser polluters creates another area of economic competition, this shies away from addressing the real need to reduce overall pollution.

Comma splice

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses (complete ideas or sentences) are joined only with a comma.

For example: "Discourse analysis in communication is a rapidly growing field of study, it includes elements of sociolinguistics and intercultural communication."

Correcting comma splices

To correct comma splice sentences, replace the comma with the correct punctuation or add an appropriate linking word. For example:

use a full stop and capital letter

- Discourse analysis in communication is a rapidly growing field of study. It includes elements sociolinguistics and intercultural communication.

use a semi-colon

- Discourse analysis in communication is a rapidly growing field of study; it includes elements of sociolinguistics and intercultural communication.

add a coordinating conjunction after the comma

- Discourse analysis in communication is a rapidly growing field of study, and it includes elements sociolinguistics and intercultural communication.

change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause, and link it to the main idea.

- Discourse analysis in communication is a rapidly growing field of study, including elements of sociolinguistics and intercultural communication.
or
- Discourse analysis in communication is a rapidly growing field of study, which includes elements of sociolinguistics and intercultural communication.

Note: While grammar checkers on your computer may identify overly long sentences that might be run-on sentences or indicate punctuation errors, they often do little more than highlight potential problems. Since the computer does not recognise the relationships between your ideas, it is up to you to decide how best to edit your writing. The flow chart on this tip sheet can help you to use your own judgement to identify and revise potential run-on sentences.