GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS
Run-ons and Comma Splices

In order to be complete, a sentence must have a subject and predicate that form an independent clause. The subject is a noun or pronoun that names the topic of the sentence; a predicate is a verb and its modifiers that comments on or makes an assertion about the subject. If a group of words is punctuated as a sentence but is grammatically incomplete because it lacks a subject or predicate or begins with a subordinating conjunction, the error is called a sentence fragment.

When two independent clauses are not separated by a conjunction or by any punctuation, the error is called a **run-on or fused sentence**. The error that results when two independent clauses are incorrectly joined with only a comma is called a **comma splice**. Run-on sentences and comma splices represent two of the most common sentence errors in academic writing and negatively impact on your effectiveness as a writer.

CORRECTING RUN-ONS AND COMMA SPLICES

As indicated above, a run-on or fused sentence incorrectly joins two independent clauses and usually has missing punctuation, for example:

> "The students have worked hard to prepare for the exam the class should be proud."

In this example, "The students have worked hard to prepare for the exam" can function as a complete sentence and stand alone: "students" is the simple subject, "have worked" is the verb, and together they form an independent clause. Likewise, "the class should be proud" can also function as a complete sentence: the simple subject is "class"; "should be" is the verb, and together they form a second independent clause.

Similarly, a comma splice joins two independent clauses with punctuation that is incorrect, for example:

> "The students have worked hard to prepare for the exam, the class should be proud."

Depending upon the emphasis you want to communicate, there are several ways to correct a run-on or a comma splice:

- Separate the two independent clauses into individual sentences by placing a period (or question mark or exclamation point, if required) between them and capitalizing the first letter of the new sentence.

  Correction:

  > "The students have worked hard to prepare for the exam. The class should be proud."

- Insert a comma and an appropriate coordinating conjunction (**for**, **and**, **nor**, **but**, **or**, **yet**, **so**) between the independent clauses. Coordinating conjunctions define a relationship between two clauses; your choice of conjunction will determine the meaning of the sentence.

  Correction:

  "The students have worked hard to prepare for the exam, and the class should be proud."

- Insert a semicolon between the independent clauses if the ideas are closely related.

  Correction:

  "The students have worked hard to prepare for the exam; the class should be proud."

- After you use a semicolon, you can also insert a transitional expression, such as **therefore, as a result, however, moreover, furthermore,** or **thus**. Transitional expressions, like coordinating conjunctions, show the relationship between two independent clauses.

  Correction:

  "The students have worked hard to prepare for the exam; as a result, the class should be proud."

- Make one of the independent clauses dependent by using a subordinating conjunction, word such as **because, since, although, when, if,** or **even though.** Subordinating conjunctions, like coordinating conjunctions and transitional expressions, help make the relationship between ideas in a sentence clear.

  Correction:

  "Because the students have worked hard to prepare for the exam, the class should be proud."

  "The class should be proud because the students have worked hard to prepare for the exam."