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Run-On Sentences

A run-on sentence is two complete thoughts (also called independent clauses) that run together without proper punctuation to connect them. The reader cannot tell where one thought ends and another begins.

Types of Run-Ons:

Balanced Negative and Positive Clauses: occur when stating what something is not while also stating what it is.

     Run-on: Amy is not a nurse she is a doctor.

     Revision: Amy is not a nurse; she is a doctor.

Illustration in the Second Clause: when an example is given in the second clause.

     Run-on: She did well in college her grade point average was 3.6.

     Revision: She did well in college. Her grade point average was 3.6.

Using "Then" in the Second Clause: "Then," and similar words, indicate a passing of time

     Run-on: Mary worked in Houston then she was transferred to Austin.

     Revision: Mary worked in Houston, but then she was transferred to Austin.

Using a Conjunctive Adverb for a Transition: most commonly begin with: therefore, however, and moreover.

     Run-on: He is very committed to his work therefore he devotes almost all his time to patient care.

     Revision: He is very committed to his work; therefore, he devotes almost all his time to patient care.

Correcting Run-Ons

There are four simple ways to correct run-on sentences.

Separate Complete Thoughts: Make two separate sentences out of the two incomplete thoughts.

     Run-on: My car broke down I was unable to attend my classes.

     Revision: My car broke down. I was unable to attend my classes.

Use a Comma and Coordinating Conjunction: Separate two complete thoughts with a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction. Common coordinating conjunctions are for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS).

     Run-on: We went to class no one was there.

     Revision: We went to class, but no one was there.

Use a Semicolon: Connect the two complete thoughts (which could be two separate sentences) with a semicolon. Do not capitalize the first word after the semicolon unless it is a proper noun.

     Run-on: When I arrived at school there was no place to park I ended up parking at the bookstore.

     Revision: When I arrived at school, there was no place to park; I ended up parking at the bookstore.

Use Subordination: Make one of the thoughts (independent clauses) dependent. Common dependent words are after, although, as because, before, even, though, if, since, unless, until, when, and while.

     Run-on: It is raining today I need my umbrella.

     Revision: Because it is raining today, I need my umbrella.