

Sentence Development Tutorial

Tutorial 2:

Run-Together Sentences

Identifying Run-Together Sentences

Correcting Run-Together Sentences

Proofreading for Run-Together Sentences

This Tutorial includes two files:

- **Lesson (2a_Run_Together_Sentences_Lesson)**

In order to learn the material presented in this tutorial more effectively, as you read you should take notes in a place that you can reference later. If it is convenient, you could print the tutorial and annotate it so you can keep it for future reference.

- **Exercises (2b_Run_Together_Sentences_Exercises** – located in the same area as the lesson)

- It has highlighted areas for you to answer the exercises using an application such as Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Download and save this file as your own; you will share it with an instructor after you complete the lesson and exercises.

Please contact the Writing Center with any questions or difficulties:

csmtwc@smccd.edu or 650-574-6436.

Run-Together Sentences

Before you begin this tutorial, we recommend that you complete the *Introductory Tutorial: Recognizing Verbs and Subjects*. This tutorial will demonstrate strategies for:

1. **identifying run-together sentences**
2. **correcting run-together sentences**
3. **proofreading for run-together sentences.**

As you do this tutorial and learn about different types of run-together sentences, be sure to notice the kind of run-together sentences that your teacher has pointed out in your writing. That way, you can learn how to proofread your own essays more effectively.

Before we describe run-together sentences and how to fix them in your own writing, let's review some information that is so basic you might have forgotten it.

What is a sentence?

Sentences are the building blocks of writing. To improve your writing, you must understand the sentence and its two main parts, the verb and the subject.*

A complete sentence is not only a group of words with a capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end. A **complete sentence** must also always:

- have a subject
- have a verb
- be a complete idea. (That is, it can stand alone and makes sense by itself.)

Some sentences can be very short, with only a few words expressing a complete idea, like this:

Jing likes reading.

She reads two books a week.

The first example is a complete sentence because it meets all three requirements—it has a subject (Jing), it has a verb (likes), and it is a complete idea (that is, “Jing likes reading”). And the second example is a complete sentence because it meets all three requirements, too—it has a subject (She), it has a verb (reads), and it is a complete idea (that is, “She reads two books a week”).

Run-together sentences (RTSs for short) occur when two complete sentences are joined with no punctuation between them or with only a comma connecting them. The next section, Part One, begins with some examples of run-together sentences.

*Note: If you need to review how to identify a verb and subject, see the *Introductory Tutorial*”
Recognizing Verbs and Subjects.

Part One: Identifying Run-Together Sentences

Consider these sentences:

Incorrect: Jing likes reading she reads two books every week.

Jing likes reading, she reads two books every week.

In your own words, explain exactly what is wrong with these two groups of words.

These two groups of words are run-together sentences. Let’s discuss exactly why they are incorrect.

Jing	likes	reading	she	reads	two books every week.
<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>		<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	

Jing	likes	reading,	she	reads	two books every week.
<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>		<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	

In the examples above, the word “reading” ends the first sentence, and “she” begins the second sentence. Inexperienced writers often write **run-together sentences** when they see that two complete ideas belong together *logically*. However, they don’t realize that these complete ideas are separate sentences *grammatically*.

As you recall, a complete sentence must always:

- have a subject
- have a verb
- be a complete idea. (That is, it can stand alone and makes sense by itself.)

“Jing likes reading” and “she reads two books every week” are both complete sentences because they each meet all three requirements—they each have a subject (“Jing” and “she”), they each have a verb (“likes” and “reads”), and they each express a complete idea (that is, “Jing likes reading” and “she reads two books every week”). However, they are both incorrect.

In Example 1, “Jing likes reading she reads two books every week,” the writer recognized that these ideas were related logically but failed to add a period after the first complete sentence “Jing likes reading.” Also, the writer did not capitalize the first letter of the next complete sentence “she reads

two books every week.” That is, the writer didn’t realize that these complete ideas were separate sentences grammatically.

In Example 2, “Jing likes reading, she reads two books every week,” the writer not only recognized that these ideas were related logically but also realized that they should be separated with punctuation. However, instead of adding a period after the first complete sentence “Jing likes reading,” the writer incorrectly added a comma and did not capitalize the first letter of the second sentence “she reads two books every week.” Often, inexperienced writers use only a comma to join two complete sentences, but a comma is never adequate to show that one sentence has ended and the next one has begun.

Run-together sentences (RTSs) are often confusing to the reader, who normally does not expect to see sentences joined this way and must stop to sort out what’s going on. In fact, run-together sentences are considered errors not only in the writing that you do for your English classes but also in all your college and professional writing. This is why it is important to learn how to identify and correct run-together sentences in your own writing.

Principle I. One way to correct a run-together sentence is by adding a period at the end of the first sentence and a capital letter at the beginning of the second.

Here is a corrected version of the sentences above:

Jing likes reading. **She** reads two books every week.

Adding a period at the end of the first sentence and a capital letter at the beginning of the second is one way to correct a run-together sentence. However, writers can use more effective ways to correct run-together sentences that both show the logical relationship between ideas and make the sentences flow more smoothly.

Part Two: Correcting Run-Together Sentences

As we reviewed in Part One, usually a run-together sentence occurs because the two ideas within it are so closely related to each other that they logically belong in the same sentence. Short, isolated sentences can make your writing sound less fluent or choppy. That is why writers often use joining words to show the logical connections between ideas. As a writer, your goal should be to logically connect long complex sentences and punctuate them correctly.

Here are some ways of connecting logically related ideas to avoid using run-together sentences.

Coordinators and Subordinators

- **Join the two sentences with a comma followed by a coordinator.** Coordinators are an effective way to correct run-together sentences because they give writers the ability to show their readers how two ideas are logically related. Here are two versions of the original run-together sentence that have been corrected by using coordinators:

Jing likes reading, so she reads two books a week.

Jing reads two books a week, for she likes reading.

A useful method to remember coordinators is that the first letter of each one together spells **FANBOYS**. See the following chart.

Coordinator	Expresses this Logical Relationship Between Ideas (or Sentences)
<u>F</u> or	cause
<u>A</u> nd	addition
<u>N</u> or	addition of negatives
<u>B</u> ut	contrast
<u>O</u> r	alternative
<u>Y</u> et	contrast
<u>S</u> o	result

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Notice that when we join two sentences with a coordinator, a comma ***always*** appears before the coordinator.

1. **Join the two sentences with a subordinator.** Like coordinators, subordinators are joining words, which show a variety of relationships between two ideas. Here are two revised versions of the original run-together sentence that have been corrected by using subordinators:

Because Jing likes reading, she reads two books a week.

Jing reads two books a week **because** she likes reading.

Here are some commonly used subordinators:

Subordinators		Express this Logical Relationship Between Ideas (or Sentences)
although though even though	while whereas even if	contrast
because since	as	cause
if unless	provided that	condition
so that		result
as soon as until before after once	since while when whenever as	time/sequence

Note: When you use a subordinator at the beginning of a sentence, you ***must*** use a comma to separate the two clauses. However, you do ***not*** use a comma if the dependent clause comes at the end of the sentence:

Although Ricky wants to go to the movies, he can't afford to go.

Ricky can't afford to go to the movies **although** he wants to go.

Principle II. Correct a run-together sentence by adding a joining word, either a coordinator (FANBOYS) or a subordinator, to show the logical relationship between the two sentences.

Note: Please refer to Tutorial 15: *Joining Ideas (Coordination and Subordination)* for more information about coordinators and subordinators.

Please open your 15b exercises file and complete Exercises 1 and 2.

Semicolons

Now that you have practiced using coordinators (FANBOYS) and subordinators to correct run-together sentences, it is time to learn how to use semicolons for the same purpose.

1. **Simply add a semicolon between the two sentences.** The semicolon is used to join two related sentences when you choose not to use a coordinator or subordinator. You do not need to capitalize the first letter of the second sentence when you use a semicolon. Often such sentences will have different subjects. One way of looking at a semicolon is to think of it as a heavy-duty comma, strong enough to join sentences:

Jing likes reading; she reads two books a week.

It was nearly sundown; my shadow stretched far ahead on the sidewalk.

Ricky wants to go to the movies; he can't afford to go.

Note: It is important to remember that the semicolon should be used far less frequently than coordinators and subordinators. Limiting yourself to two or three semicolons per essay is a good rule.

Principle III. Correct a run-together sentence by adding a semicolon but only if the logical relationship between the two sentences cannot be fixed with a coordinator or subordinator. Be careful not to overuse semicolons.

Please open your 15b exercises file and complete Exercise 3.

Semicolons with Transition Words

Semicolons with transition words are another effective way to correct run-together sentences.

1. **Add a semicolon, a transition word(s), and a comma between the two sentences.** Consider these sentences:

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Jing likes reading; **as a result**, she reads two books a week.

It was nearly sundown; **thus**, my shadow stretched far ahead on the sidewalk.

Ricky wants to go to the movies; **however**, he can't afford to go.

Like coordinators and subordinators, transition words express the logical relationships between ideas, but they **do not** join sentences; therefore, you must *always* use a **semicolon** with a transition word to link two sentences together. For this reason, coordinators and subordinators join sentences more effectively, and writers should be careful not to overuse semicolons with transition words. See the following chart that lists some common transition words.

Transition Words		Express this Logical Relationship Between Ideas (or Sentences)
likewise similarly	in comparison also	comparison
however still nonetheless	otherwise nevertheless in contrast	contrast
therefore thus consequently	hence as a result	result
on the other hand		alternative
otherwise		condition
then next previously	subsequently afterwards	time or sequence

Please refer to Tutorial 15: *Joining Ideas (Coordination and Subordination)* for more information about using semicolons with transition words.

Principle IV. Correct a run-together sentence by using a semicolon and transition word(s) followed by a comma. Transition words by themselves don't correct run-together sentences. Again, be careful not to overuse semicolons and transition words.

Please open your 15b exercises file and complete Exercises 4, 5 and 6.

Final Activity

Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay where your teachers has graded and marked your run-together sentences. Are there any similarities in your run-together sentences? For example, is there always a comma in the middle? If there is a comma, does the same word ever follow the comma? The words *it*, *then* and *however* often follow the comma in the run-together sentences that students write. Knowing what to look for during proofreading can make it easier to find your run-together sentences.
2. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor working in the Writing Center. To make this appointment, sign up using the same method you use to make essay conference appointments. Be sure to include a comment or note that you are meeting about a tutorial.
3. During this appointment, the instructor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to the exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.