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### **Avoiding Fragments and Run On Sentences**

**Run-together sentences** occur when you punctuate two or more sentences as if they were one sentence. When you put a comma between them, there is still an error because commas do not grammatically separate two complete sentences. Why do run-together sentences occur? Because people think that two closely related ideas must be the same sentence.

**Fragments** occur when you don't have a subject and verb unit and it's not a complete thought; it's a dependent clause.

Example: I rebelled against my father, my family got very angry with me.

This is a run-together sentence because there are two grammatically complete ideas here, with two subjects and two verbs. (It can also be called a comma-splice error.)

Here is a run-together sentence (sometimes called a run-on sentence) that does not have a comma:

Example: I did not join the gang I was afraid of getting into trouble in school.

#### **Ways to correct run-together sentences:**

**1. Put a period between the sentences and capitalize the first letter of the second sentence.**

I rebelled against my mother. My family got very angry with me.

**2. Put a semicolon between the two sentences. The first letter of the second sentence is always lower case after a semicolon.**

I rebelled against my mother; my family got very angry with me.

**3. The third and the best way to correct run-together sentences is to use a logical joining word in between them. Why is it the best way?**

- o **It is the best way because you are then helping the readers by showing them what you think the relationship between the sentences is.**
- o **You are telling the readers what you mean rather than leaving it up to them to supply the relationship.**
- o **It is also the best because you don't end up with a lot of short and choppy sentences.**

**Coordinating Conjunctions:**

There are only seven coordinating conjunctions. The easiest way to remember them is with the silly word that is made up of the first letter of each, FANBOYS.

FOR	shows a cause relationship.
AND	shows an addition relationship.
NOR	shows the addition of negatives.
BUT	shows a contrast relationship.
OR	shows an alternative relationship.
YET	shows a contrast relationship.
SO	shows a result relationship.

Punctuate sentences joined by coordinating conjunctions with a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

I rebelled against my mother, and my family got very angry with me.

It is acceptable to leave out the commas if the sentences you are joining are short. It is also acceptable to separate the two sentences and begin the second with the coordinating conjunction. Do this only rarely--for effect.

**Subordinating Conjunctions:**

Time:	As	Before	After	When	Whenever	As soon as
	Since	Until	As long as	By the time	While	

Contrast:	Although	Though	Even though	Even if
	Whereas			

Condition:	If	Unless
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Cause/Effect:	Because	Since	As	So that
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Other common subordinators:	Whether	Wherever	As if
	As though	The next time	

Subordinating conjunctions can join two sentences at the beginning of the ideas:

When I rebelled against my mother, my family got very angry with me.

**Put a comma after the first idea when the subordinating conjunction joins two ideas at the beginning.**

Or subordinating conjunctions can join two sentences between the two ideas:

I rebelled against my mother even though my family got very angry with me.

**There is no comma if the subordinating conjunction joins between the two ideas.**

The following words are subordinators but they do not join sentences in the same way. If you find these words between sentences, you have not found a run-together sentence.

Who            Which            Where            That

The following words are not conjunctions and do not join sentences. They are also over-used.

Also	As a result	Hence	Otherwise
On the other hand	Besides	However	
Consequently	In addition	Similarly	
Finally	Moreover	Then	
For example	Nevertheless	Therefore	
Furthermore	Next	Thus	

We often have to tell students to stop using them so often in their writing. Consider the following paragraph.

I have two fathers; however, they are very different. My stepfather has always had a steady job. Thus he is always able to pay the bills and buy the groceries. On the other hand, my father doesn't care for steady jobs. He is a singer; moreover, he only works three to four nights a week in clubs. Consequently, he only sends us ten dollars a month. However, he only does this when he is out of state. Discipline is another difference between my two dads. For example, my stepfather believes that children should always obey their parents. On the other hand, my father has very different views; therefore, he always encourages my brother and me to rebel against the rules.

The paragraph sounds silly because the sentences are so short and choppy. Transition words should only be used very rarely--when there is a big transition between ideas. Do not use them to join sentences.

**Joining Words Chart:**

<b>Logical Relationship</b>	<b>Coordinating Conjunctions</b>	<b>Subordinating Conjunctions</b>	<b>Major Transitions</b>
Addition	and		also moreover
Contrast and Concession	but yet	while whereas although though even though	
Cause/Effect	for	because since as	
Result Effect	so and so	so that in that in order that	therefore thus hence consequently
Condition		if unless provided that	

**EXERCISE #1:**

In the following exercises, the best way to locate comma-splice errors is first to look for commas at the ends of complete sentences. Remember, of course, that there may be a comma at the end of what could be a complete sentence but that the sentence may continue:

She went jogging in the rain, picking up a nasty cold in the process.

The comma after rain marks a position where the sentence could have ended but, of course, it didn't. When you find such a comma, the second thing to look for is whether what follows it is a new subject and verb. In the sentence above, there is no new subject and verb; in the sentence below there is:

She went jogging in the rain, she never let the weather stop her.

In the sentences below, identify all RTS errors and correct them, using a coordinator, subordinator, major transition word, or a semicolon. Some of the sentences are correct.

1. Just last week my little sister broke up with her boyfriend on Facebook, she had no problem changing her relationship status from "in a relationship" to "single."
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2. I told her she should give her boyfriend—of six months—the courtesy of telling him such news face to face she didn't go speak to him.
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3. She claimed that this is a common occurrence her first boyfriend broke up with her on Facebook.
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4. High school students, maybe the ones who aren't such great communicators, are usually the ones using Facebook to do their dirty work.
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5. My Aunt has already told her thirteen year old son that he needs to always communicate the important stuff face to face even if it is difficult, he shouldn't make private information public at least until he has talked in person about it.
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6. Recently, I read an article about a school district back east that gave a workshop for students on break-up etiquette, one of the main lessons was to be respectful of others' feelings and discussing serious issues face to face first.

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7. There were pins given out to teenagers at the workshop stating, "Face it; don't *Facebook* it!"

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8. My little sister has hurt her now ex-boyfriend, a lot of other high schoolers have been hurt by Facebook posts.

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9. I thought Carrie Bradshaw on *Sex in the City* had it bad when her boyfriend broke up with her on a Post-it, the relationship status change on *Facebook* seems to top this.

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10. I'm sure there are some positive aspects about *Facebook* and social networking, I haven't quite figured out what those are.

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## **EXERCISE #2:**

In the sentences below, identify all comma-splice errors and correct them, using a coordinator, subordinator, major transition word, or a semicolon otherwise. Some of the sentences are correct.

1. Our football team finished in the bottom ten again last year, they are pretty untalented.

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2. The offense averaged only 3.6 points a game, the defense was worse.

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3. When they scored their first touchdown, the coach fainted.

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4. The heaviest player on the team weighed 240 pounds, he was the quarterback.

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5. The team needs new players, most of their old players are on the football field.

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6. They had one momentous triumph, they won their last game of the season.

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7. Our opponents were favored by 39 points, they were probably a little overconfident.

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8. It was the greatest disappointment of the year, nobody ever expected anything like it.

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9. The team tried to carry the coach around the field on their shoulders, they couldn't lift him.

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10. It is true that he's a little heavy, he weighs about 300 pounds, more or less.

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11. He once played guard for the Sacramento Poltroons, a minor-league football team.

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12. The effort to lift him injured three players, who had to be hospitalized afterward.

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13. The team we beat, our arch-rivals, went into shock after the game, they had to consult sports psychologists to communicate their feelings.

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14. Many were upset, they had lost to the worst team in the state.

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15. Thus we can see the value of athletics, they are good for the pocketbooks of psychologists.

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**Write an RTS error you made on an essay here.**

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**Now, correct it using one of the joining words. Oftentimes the joining words help us better communicate our thoughts/ideas.**

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