# Run-On Sentences

# What is a run-on sentence?

A run-on sentence is a sentence in which two independent clauses are not properly punctuated. An independent clause is a complete sentence that has both a clear subject and a main verb. Independent clauses are either separated from or joined with surrounding sentences using punctuation. There are a couple of different ways to create a run-on. One way is to improperly separate two complete sentences, and another is to improperly join two complete sentences. The latter is most commonly referred to as a comma splice which is a type of run-on and is covered on a different handout. Failure to separate independent clause is a serious error that can cause confusion for the reader.

# Example:

“Kristy brought home a puppy from the pound she loves little dogs.” ||

Subject Main Verb Subject Main Verb

Or

“Kristy brought home a puppy from the pound for she loves little dogs.” | | | |

Subject Main Verb Conj. Subject Main Verb

Both examples have two independent clauses, each with a subject and a main verb, but neither has the proper punctuation to join or separate them.

# Solutions:

1. Use a period to separate the independent clauses.

“Kristy brought home a puppy from the pound. She loves little dogs.”

1. Use a semicolon to emphasize a connection or relationship between independent clauses.

“Kristy brought home a puppy from the pound; she loves little dogs.”

1. Use a comma with a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses (Note: A comma and coordinating conjunction are needed to properly join them).

“Kristy brought home a puppy from the pound, for she loves little dogs.”

1. Use a subordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses (Note: Using a subordinating conjunction can make one independent clause dependent on the other and may or may not require the use of a comma, depending on their order).

“Kristy brought home a puppy from the pound because she loves little dogs.”

Or

“Because she loves little dogs, Kristy brought home a puppy from the pound.”

# Exercise

**Correct the run-on sentences by rewriting each one on the line provided below. Decide whether to join or separate them using one of the four ways demonstrated on the reverse side of this handout.**

1. Jennifer was late to the company meeting she lost her wallet.

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1. I really want to go to the party tomorrow night I must finish my homework.

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1. The Vikings were the first Europeans to land in the Americas but Columbus is usually given credit for the discovery.

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1. The restaurant was beautiful the food was overpriced.

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1. The current was too strong so Brian decided not to risk crossing the river.

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**Identify the run-on sentences by underlining the place where one independent clause ends and the next one starts. The first one has been done for you. There are five more.**

My worst experience of the week was going home for lunch, rather than eating at work my children didn’t know I was coming and they had used most of the bread. All I had to make a sandwich with were two thin, crumpled pieces of crust so I sat there eating my tattered sandwich and trying to relax then the telephone rang. It was for my daughter, who was in the bathroom, she called down to me that I should get the person’s name and number. As soon as I sat down again, someone knocked on the door, it was a neatly dressed couple with bright eyes who wanted to talk with me about a higher power in life. I politely got rid of them and went back to finish lunch. I thought I would relax over my coffee, I had to break up a fight between my two young sons about which television channel to watch. As a last but of frustration, my daughter came downstairs and asked me to drive her over to a friend’s house before I went back to work.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Langan, John. *College Writing Skills with Readings*, 7th edition, McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2008, pp. 481. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)