



# The Writing Center

## Directed Learning Activity



### Comma Splices and Run-Ons

Student:

Date:

About This DLA

#### **Important Note**

All the activities in the DLA must be completed in their entirety before receiving credit for completion. Students are welcome to meet with a tutor if they need help, but please be aware that students might need a second appointment for review and signature in that case. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, they will be sent a spreadsheet at the start of each semester with all Writing Center appointments, indicating whether you have completed the DLA with a tutor or not. You can also access a summary of your appointment via EAB Navigate (please see the last section of this DLA, titled "Review the DLA").

#### **Learning Outcomes**

Through computer and other independent work, this activity will familiarize you with comma splices and run-ons and help you practice finding and correcting these common sentence errors.

#### **Activities (approximately 1 hour)**

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

#### **DLA Video Review**

If you would like to [watch a brief video that reviews parts of the Comma Splice and Run-Ons DLA](#) content, please use the QR code below:



#### **Understanding Comma Splices and Run-Ons**

To understand comma splices and run-ons, we must first review what an independent clause is.

**Independent clause:** a group of words with a subject and verb that can stand alone as a sentence. It expresses a complete thought.

**Examples:**

- I like to watch *Netflix* original shows.
- Online classes have made education more accessible to me.
- Traveling to the rural areas of Scotland is on my bucket list.

### **Common Structural Errors When Coordinating Independent Clauses**

A **run-on** (a.k.a. a fused sentence) occurs when there is no separation between independent clauses.

**Example:** My sister is a hairstylist she works in the city of Orange. **(Incorrect)**

A **comma splice** occurs when a writer joins two independent clauses with only a comma, which on its own is insufficient coordination.

**Example:** Dogs are one of the best pets a person can have, they are loving and loyal. **(Incorrect)**

### **How to Avoid Coordination Errors**

Here are five easy ways to join your independent clauses correctly. It's a good idea to practice using all of the possibilities so that you will be able to vary your sentence types.

#### **1. Period (.)**

A period is the most common way to show a reader where one sentence (independent clause) ends and another one begins.

- **The best shows are the ones with developed plots. There aren't many shows these days that have good writing though.**

#### **2. Semicolon (;)**

For a more formal, academic approach, use the semicolon in this way when the relationship between the ideas is implicit or understood without a conjunctive word (or words).

When you use the semicolon, you can think of it as a piece of stacked punctuation: the top half acts like a period that stops the first independent clause while the comma in the bottom half tells the reader that the second clause is related to the first. This will help us remember that we are still showing separation and relationship.

- **I'll be in the theatre; you can wait in line for popcorn.**

#### **3. Comma (,) + a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS)**

These are the **coordinating conjunctions**, which are the only seven words you can use to connect two independent clauses when using a comma: **For And Nor But Or Yet So**

- **Zombies may take over the world, and there may be nothing we can do about it.**

- *Note: Don't confuse this with a compound verb. For example, "The dog ran and barked" is a simple sentence with a compound verb; it is not a compound sentence because there is only one subject, "dog." It has a compound verb because the dog did two things: ran and barked. A compound sentence would say, "The dog ran, and **it** barked."*

#### 4. Subordination

When you use a dependent clause with an independent clause, you are using subordination. When you subordinate, you are telling your reader that your dependent clause is under (as the prefix "sub-" suggests) or less important than your independent clause. Here are *a few* common subordinating conjunctions: **after, although, if, until, when, as, because, since, before, even though, while.**

When you place the dependent clause before the independent clause, remember to place a comma before the independent clause begins:

- **Because Kathy likes to help members of her community, she decided to feed the homeless on Thanksgiving Day.**

When the dependent clause comes after the independent clause, do not use a comma.

- **Kathy decided to feed the homeless on Thanksgiving Day because she likes to help members of her community.**

#### 5. Semicolon (;) + conjunctive adverb + comma (,)

When you use a conjunctive adverb while coordinating, be sure to 1) use a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb 2) choose the conjunctive adverb showing the appropriate relationship 3) place a comma after the conjunctive adverb (if it is more than one syllable [with the exception of hence and first]). Here are *a few* common conjunctive adverbs: **however, otherwise, in addition, furthermore, therefore, consequently, nevertheless, on the other hand, first.**

Using a conjunctive adverb makes the formal connection of the semicolon's relationship explicitly understood. For a detailed list of some of these words and the relationships they show, refer to the "[Words That Show Relationships](#)" handout.

- **It is not easy being a college student; however, many students overcome stress and anxiety with the help of counselors and student services.**

#### Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

**1. Online Quiz**

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/CommaSplicesAndRunOnsDLAQuiz> and take the [Comma Splices and Run-Ons DLA Quiz](#). You must score 80% or higher on the quiz before seeing a tutor. After you complete the task, **PLEASE ASK A LAB TUTOR OR FRONT DESK ATTENDANT TO PRINT THE PAGE THAT HAS YOUR SCORE. DO NOT EXIT THE PROGRAM UNTIL THIS PAGE HAS BEEN PRINTED (FREE OF CHARGE).**

**2. Comma Splices and Run-Ons Review**

Review the information above on comma splices and run-ons. Then answer the following questions.

What is a comma splice?

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What is a run-on?

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What is the difference between a comma splice and a run-on?

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**3. Paragraph Correction**

Look at the following complaint sent to the manager at a *Starbucks* and identify the comma splice (4) and run-on (5) errors. Then fixing each, write a revised paragraph on a separate sheet of paper or on a Word document.

I'm writing to you because I received poor service from one of your *Starbucks* staff. I have been coming to your location for the past year, also I come here so often that the regular staff know me by name and know my order without any issues. I have never had any problems with the old staff, however your location recently hired many new employees. Overall, most of the new staff have been fine one employee has been consistently giving me problems. When I visited your establishment last week, this new staff member got my order wrong and refused to accommodate the mistake. I understand that mistakes happen nevertheless your employee was extremely rude to me when I tried to speak with them. I kindly told the employee that my order

was wrong since they gave me a drink with whole milk instead of oat milk I tried to ask for a refund or if they could fix my order, yet no recompense was extended to me. This may seem like a small matter; I cannot drink whole milk I am allergic to it. I wanted to speak to you directly about this employee you have not been present the last week, and this employee continually gives me an attitude and gets my order wrong. Please respond as soon as possible, I would like this matter taken care of.

**Choose 4a or 4b below.**

**4a. Correct Your Own Writing**

Collect some of your graded work that identifies comma splice and run-on errors. Correct all marked errors and look for others to correct as well. Bring this revised work to the DLA tutoring session.

**If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (4b).**

**4b. Sentence Correction**

Read the following sentences and *identify whether each is a Comma Splice (CS), Run-on (RO), or correct (C)*. **If there is an error, correct it using one of the methods discussed above.** The first one has been done for you.

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<b>CS</b>	1. Many of the world’s biggest festivals are based on religious foundations, they focus on a special occasion of feasting and celebration.
	2. One major festival that is celebrated by Hindus is Holi this festival is also known as the “Festival of Colors.”
	3. Holi takes place in March every year, it is observed by Hindus and Sikhs.
	4. With bonfires being lit and colored powder and water being thrown at one another, it is truly an unforgettable sight to see.
	5. The bonfires also hold significance to the Hindu celebration, they represent the devotion of Prince Prahlada to the Hindu god, Vishnu.
	6. Because Prahlada’s parents disapproved of his faith to Vishnu, Prahlada was punished and forced to sit in a bonfire.
	7. The prince was protected by Vishnu, he safely sat in the fire unharmed and did not burn.
	8. According to the <i>National Geographic</i> website, “Holi usually marks the happy transition from harsh, dark winter to brighter, warmer springtime.”
	9. The festival also represents a time of change and forgiveness the cultural significance of this day encourages people to kindle new friendships and rid themselves of their past mistakes.

10. Holi brings various groups together it has been acknowledged as a time where social differences are relaxed.
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**5. Review the DLA**

Go to <https://mtsac.campus.eab.com/> and use EAB to make an appointment either online or in-person. During your session, explain your understanding of the information you've learned so far. Consider the main concept you learned in this DLA, and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.

**Sign-off procedure:**

- Please review the **Appointment Summary Report** through your EAB appointment (under “my doc” on the desktop and phone app). This is where your in-center or dedicated writing specialist will indicate the **title of your DLA** and state whether you have **Completed it** or **Not Completed it**. These reports are sent automatically to your instructor on record; however, if there is an issue, please contact us at [writingcenter@mtsac.edu](mailto:writingcenter@mtsac.edu) or (909) 274-5325.

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