

Avoiding Comma Splices (and Fused or Run-on Sentences)

A comma splice happens when you join two or more complete sentences with a comma, this is an example of it. You should not ever do it, you can see how it makes this sentence hard to read. Imagine if I wrote the whole tip sheet like this, it would be very hard for you to follow.

A comma splice is when you mistakenly join two *independent clauses* with a comma and nothing else. The comma can be used to join clauses, but you can only join an *independent clause* with a *dependent clause*.

What about fused sentences? A fused or run-on sentence is the same as a comma splice except you don't use the comma. It is even harder to read than a comma splice because you can't easily tell where one clause ends and another begins. Consider the following examples of both:

This clause is independent. Although this one is dependent. This clause is also independent.

Correct: *This clause is independent, although this one is dependent.*

Incorrect (comma splice): *This clause is independent, this clause is also independent.*

Incorrect (fused/run-on): *This clause is independent this clause is also independent.*

But how do you fix these? There are a few options, and they work for both errors.

- Sometimes it can be tempting to join two sentences together because they are related; this sentence shows you how to do that by using a semicolon.
- Another thing you can do is break the sentences apart. Even if they are related, it's okay to separate them with a period.
- Lastly, you can use a conjunction (*and, but, however, etc.*) to join them together, and that makes them grammatically correct again.

Consider the following examples:

Comma Splice (not okay): *This sentence loves the next one so much it wants to snuggle, this sentence loves it back.*

Fused/Run-on (not okay): *This sentence loves the next one so much it wants to snuggle this sentence loves it back.*

Possible Fix #1: *This sentence loves the next one so much it wants to snuggle; this sentence loves it back.*

Possible Fix #2: *This sentence loves the next one so much it wants to snuggle. This sentence loves it back (but thinks it's okay to spend some time apart).*

Possible Fix #3: *This sentence loves the next one so much it wants to snuggle, **and** this sentence loves it back.*

If you can't tell the difference between dependent and independent clauses, just ask yourself whether the clause can stand on its own as a complete sentence. If it can, it is an independent clause. If it can't, it's a dependent clause.