

# Fragments, Comma Splices and Fused Sentences

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## Fragments:

Many errors in **fragments** are caused by a sentence which begins with a participial phrase or with a subordinating conjunction. Remember: Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate.

*Incorrect:* Shouldering so many responsibilities for her sisters and brother for so long.

*Incorrect:* Whenever she asks for a cup of coffee at the local Starbucks.

Fragments can be repaired by (1) joining them to complete sentences or (2) turning the fragment into a complete sentence.

### Example:

*Incorrect:* On that morning I sat in my usual spot. On the old wooden stool in the corner of my grandmother's kitchen.

*Repaired:* On that morning I sat in my usual spot, **on** the old wooden stool in the corner of my grandmother's kitchen.

*Incorrect:* The pilots ejected from the burning plane, landing in the water not far from the ship. And immediately popped their flares and life vests.

*Repaired:* The pilots ejected from the burning plane, landing in the water not far from the ship. **They** immediately popped their flares and life vests.

## Exercise 1: Repairing Fragments

**DIRECTIONS:** Each of the following is a fragment--either a participial phrase or a dependent clause. Complete the sentence with an appropriate independent clause. Add commas where necessary.

1. Even though it was raining \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ until we bought the car.
3. If you want to do well in your essay \_\_\_\_\_
4. Having moved to a new country \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ before I change my mind.
6. Although she was late \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_ because he studies regularly.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ like baseball, basketball, and volleyball.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ after I proofread it.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ as soon as I finish the assignment.

## Exercise 2: Repairing Fragments

**DIRECTIONS:** Repair any fragment by attaching it to a nearby sentence or by rewriting it as a complete sentence. If a word group is correct, write “correct” after it.

1. Listening to the CD her sister had sent, Mia was overcome with a mix of emotions. Happiness, homesickness, nostalgia.
2. Cortés and his soldiers were astonished when they looked down from the mountains and saw Tenochtitlán. The magnificent capital of the Aztecs.
3. Although my spoken Spanish is not very good. I can read the language with ease.
4. There are several reasons for not eating meat. One reason being that dangerous chemicals are used throughout the various stages of meat production.
5. To learn how to sculpt beauty from everyday life. This is my intention in studying art and archaeology.
6. The panther lay motionless behind the rock. Waiting silently for its prey.
7. Mother loved to play all our favorite games. Canasta, Monopoly, hide-and-seek, and even kick-the-can.
8. With machetes, the explorers cut their way through the tall grasses to the edge of the canyon. Then they began to lay out the tapes for the survey.
9. The owners of the online grocery store rented a warehouse in the Market district. An area catering to small businesses.
10. If a woman from the desert tribe showed anger toward her husband, she was whipped in front of the whole village. And shunned by the rest of the women.

## Comma Splice:

A **comma splice** occurs when a comma, rather than a period, is used incorrectly between complete sentences. The word splice means “to fasten ends together,” which is a handy procedure, except when splicing has anything to do with sentences.

*Examples:* The icebergs broke off from the glacier, they drifted into the sea.

Gestures are a means of communication for everyone, however, they are essential for the hearing-impaired.

To revise a **comma splice**, you have four choices:

1. Use a **comma** and a **coordinating conjunction** (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*).

*Incorrect:* Stefan bought a new red convertible, then he brought it over to his girlfriend’s house.

*Correct:* Stefan bought a new red convertible, and then he brought it over to his girlfriend’s house.

2. Use a **semicolon** (or, if appropriate, a colon or a dash). A semicolon may be used alone; it can also be accompanied by a transitional expression.

*Correct:* Stefan bought a new red convertible; then he brought it over to his girlfriend’s house.

*Correct:* Stefan bought a new red convertible; afterward, he brought it over to his girlfriend’s house.

3. Add a period to make the clauses into **separate sentences**.

*Correct:* Stefan bought a new red convertible. Then he brought it over to his girlfriend’s house.

4. **Restructure** the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.

*Correct:* After Stefan bought a new red convertible, he brought it over to his girlfriend’s house.

One of these revision techniques will often work better than the others for a particular sentence. The fourth technique, the one requiring the most extensive revision, is frequently the most effective.

## Exercise 3: Repairing Comma Splices

**DIRECTIONS:** Each of the following sentences contains a comma splice. Fix each one using the techniques suggested.

1. The city had one public swimming pool, it stayed packed with children all summer long. [Restructure the sentence.]

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2. The building is being renovated, therefore at times we have no heat, water, or electricity. [Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.]

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3. The view was not what the travel agent had described, where were the rolling hills and the shimmering rivers?  
[Make two sentences.]

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4. All those gnarled equations looked like toxic insects, maybe I was going to have to rethink my major. [Use a semicolon.]

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5. The city government had good reason to fear a major earthquake, most of the business district was built on landfill.  
[Use a colon.]

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6. The car was hardly worth trading, the frame was twisted and the block was warped. [Restructure the sentence.]

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7. The next time an event is canceled because of bad weather, don't blame the meteorologist, blame nature. [Make two sentences.]

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8. Ray was fluent in American Sign Language, he could sign as easily as he could speak. [Restructure the sentence.]

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9. Susanna arrived with a stack of her latest hats, she hoped the gift shop would place a big winter order.  
[Restructure the sentence.]

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10. There was one major reason for John's wealth, his grandfather had been a multimillionaire. [Use a colon.]

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## Fused Sentence:

A **fused sentence** occurs when two independent clauses are joined (fused) without any punctuation.

*Example (fused sentence):* My father designs and installs wind turbines he travels all over the Saudi Arabia as an energy consultant.

Notice that we have two ideas in two independent clauses:

- My father installs and designs wind turbines
- He travels all over Saudi Arabia as an energy consultant.

Sometimes, a writer has three or four ideas, all competing for attention.

*Example (fused sentence with comma splice):* Fashion shows in the clothes we wear, it is constantly changing and repeating itself although fashion in the form of haute couture is everywhere, it isn't for everyone.

This sentence has four clauses:

- Fashion shows in the clothes we wear (independent - can stand alone as a sentence)
- it is constantly changing and repeating itself (independent - can stand alone as a sentence)
- although fashion in the form of haute couture is everywhere (dependent - cannot stand alone)
- it isn't for everyone (independent)

Some people use the term “run-on sentence” to refer both to fused sentences and comma splices. Some students think that a run-on sentence is a particularly long sentence; in other words, one that “runs on” for a while. It's not. A comma splice or fused sentence can appear in a relatively short sentence. A “run-on” is an error in punctuation that needs to be fixed.

### Fixing a Fused Sentence

To fix a fused sentence, determine where one main idea ends and another one begins. In the sentence above, for example, there seems to be a logical division between the words itself and although.

Although there are other ways to correct a fused sentence (see “Comma Splices” above), the two most obvious are:

1. Placing a **period** between the two main idea.

*Revision:* Fashion shows in the clothes we wear, and it is constantly changing and repeating itself. Although fashion in the form of haute couture is everywhere, it isn't for everyone.

2. Placing a **semicolon** between the two main ideas.

*Revision:* Fashion shows in the clothes we wear, and it is constantly changing and repeating itself; although fashion in the form of haute couture is everywhere, it isn't for everyone.

## Exercise 4: Repairing Fused Sentences

**DIRECTIONS:** Please edit the following to eliminate any fused sentences.

1. Janine's uncle never graduated from high school he started his own landscaping company at 16.
2. I have had a Mac computer for a year already I have no regrets about buying it.
3. People make their way across the desert they arrive in trucks with little ventilation, and they are often beaten by the men who smuggle them.
4. These political victories add up it's not just money, but dignity at home and on the job.
5. Immigrants can be sentenced to prison most are sent back to their native homelands.
6. Jammal's supervisor installed a new fingerprint reader when employees arrive they must enter an employee number and place their index finger on a small sensor.
7. The teacher distributed several worksheets some of them were taken directly from the textbook.
8. Amar Chang has a goal in fourteen consecutive matches he is three shy of the record.
9. The dog jumped and barked near the lake he noticed an alligator swimming toward shore.