How to Correct Run-on Sentences

What Is a Run-On?
A run-on is two or more complete sentences* written as one sentence. It has too much information for a single sentence, and it just keeps going!

A run on is not a fragment!
- A fragment is an incomplete thought.
- A run-on has too many complete thoughts!

There are two types of run-ons:

Classic run-ons have two or more complete thoughts* with no punctuation except at the end:

Ballet is a classical form of dance it has been performed for centuries.

Comma Splices have a comma between the complete thoughts, but a comma alone is not strong enough:

Ballet is a classical form of dance, it has been performed for centuries.

Fixing Run-ons

Three Main Ways
The two thoughts are complete, and they can be properly connected in three main ways:

Period [.].—A period is placed to form two sentences:

Ballet is a classical form of dance. It has been performed for centuries.
- The period goes between the two complete thoughts.
- Remember to capitalize the first word after the period.
- Do not add any other words to either sentence.

Semicolon [;].—The semicolon goes between the two complete thoughts:

Ballet is a classical form of dance; it has been performed for centuries.
- DO NOT capitalize the next word after the semicolon.
- Do not add any other words to either sentence.
- Use semicolons sparingly – only once or twice per page.

Comma + FANBOYS [For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So] a.k.a. Coordinating Conjunctions—relate the thoughts to each other:

Ballet is a classical form of dance, and it has been performed for centuries.

I’m out of dishwasher soap, so I need to go to the store.

*For this discussion, “complete” means the sentence or thought has both a subject and a verb.
Run-ons and Your Writing: General Tips

- Look at the sentence length. If it is more than three lines, it could be a run-on.
- Read your sentence out loud. If you have to catch your breath before the end, it’s too long.
- If you get lost as you’re reading the sentence, so will your audience.
- If you’re not sure, play it safe and try to make it more concise.

More Ways to Fix Run-ons

Subordinators and Subordinating Clauses

Add an appropriate subordinator to one of the thoughts to make it incomplete. Then attach it to the remaining complete thought:

**Since I’m out of dishwasher soap, I need to go to the store.**
- When you add a **subordinator** to one of the thoughts, it becomes a *subordinate clause*.
- A subordinate clause is a type of dependent clause.
- The remaining complete thought becomes the **main clause**.

Punctuation – do I add a comma or not?

If the main clause comes first, **do not** add a comma:

**I need to go to the store since I’m out of dishwasher soap.**

If the main clause comes **second**, **do** add a comma:

**Since I’m out of dishwasher soap, I need to go to the store.**

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<th>Common Subordinators</th>
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Trimming the Fat

Sometimes it’s better to make sentences shorter rather than adding more words or punctuation.

- Break up the run-on into smaller, simpler sentences.
- Eliminate repetitive or unnecessary words.
- Try to say it in fewer words.

Sample: To make brownies, first get a bowl out of the cupboard and a wooden spoon and two eggs, and the brownie mix and preheat the oven; after preheating the oven, empty the mix into the bowl and crack two eggs and stir it carefully, not too fast.

Revised: To make brownies, first get a bowl out of the cupboard and[,] a wooden spoon[,] and two eggs, and the brownie mix[,] and preheat the oven; [A]fter preheating the oven, empty the mix into the bowl and crack two eggs[,] and add the eggs[,] and stir it carefully[,] not too fast.

Final: To make brownies, first get a bowl, a wooden spoon, two eggs, and the brownie mix. After preheating the oven, empty the mix into the bowl and add the eggs. Stir it carefully.

*Note: these revisions may be different from yours, and that’s okay. Be creative!*