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Run-on Sentences

Hi, it's Jennifer signing on to talk about run-on sentences. I'm sure you've heard of them, and you've probably been guilty of writing one or two. But after watching this video, you'll know what they are and how to recognize and fix them.

A run-on sentence is a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses without proper punctuation, coordinating conjunctions, or transitional expressions. That may seem like a foreign language to you, so I'll give you some examples. Let's start with a 'guilty' sentence.

To be seen: Incorrect: Allison bought a new guitar she had wanted one for a while.

One way to correct a run-on is to separate it into two (or more) sentences. You want to make sure that every independent clause is separated correctly.

In this example, put the period after guitar and start a new sentence with 'she.'

To be seen: Correct: Allison bought a new guitar. She had wanted one for a while.

Another way to reform a guilty sentence is to add a comma and a coordinating conjunction. Coordinating conjunctions are **and**, **but**, **or**, **for**, **yet**, **nor**, and **so**.

To be seen: Correct: Allison bought a new guitar, **for** she had wanted one for a while.

You have to be careful with these, because they are not all interchangeable. For example, if you were to write 'Allison bought a new guitar, nor she had wanted one for a while,' it would not make sense.

Here's another example of using a comma and a coordinating conjunction. This sentence is incorrect:

To be seen: Incorrect: Brandt went to the store he bought a loaf of bread.

Fix it by putting a comma and the word 'and' after 'store' and before 'he.'

To be seen: Correct: Brandt went to the store, **and** he bought a loaf of bread.

Another way to fix a guilty run-on sentence is to add a semi-colon and a transitional word or phrase. Examples of transitional words and phrases are: however, moreover, on the other hand, nevertheless, instead, also, therefore, consequently, otherwise, and as a result.

Here's an example sentence:

Incorrect: Jenna did not eat the ice cream she had a piece of chocolate cake.

You can fix it by adding a transitional word like however or instead. Insert a semi-colon after the first clause, followed by the transitional word or phrase and a comma.

To be seen: Correct: Jenna did not eat the ice cream; **instead**, she had a piece of chocolate cake.

You can also fix the sentence by using a subordinating conjunction and a comma. Some subordinating conjunctions are: after, although, before, unless, as, because, if, since, until, when, and while. In this case, let's use 'although' at the beginning of the sentence and a comma after the first clause.

To be seen: Correct: **Although** Jenna did not eat the ice cream, she had a piece of chocolate cake.

You may also connect two independent clauses with a semi-colon, but I don't recommend it unless the two sentences are closely related. Here's an example:

To be seen: Incorrect: Paul laughed at Jim's joke it was horrible.

To be seen: Correct: Paul laughed at Jim's joke; it was horrible.

Another type of run-on sentence is a comma splice. You end up with a comma splice when you attempt to connect two independent clauses with a comma without a coordinating conjunction. This is just as bad as using no punctuation at all. We'll go over comma splices in more detail in the comma splice video, but for now I'll just give you one example.

John and Maria left the concert early, they went to dinner.

You can fix it by using one of the above solutions. For the sake of time, I'll just show you one way.

John and Maria left the concert early, **and** they went to dinner.

One last note: when you have more than two independent clauses together without proper punctuation, it can get very messy. Even if you "fix" the sentence by using the above examples, you may end up with a sentence that is too long and confusing. Using the tips will help you, but you may still have to revise for clarity and readability. Try rewriting or restructuring your sentence so it flows, makes sense, and is grammatically correct.

I hope this video has helped you understand run-on sentences and how to fix them. For more information, check out the comma splice video or ask your instructor for help. Signing off now...good luck!