

FRAGMENTS, COMMA SPLICES, AND RUN-ONS

What is a fragment?

A fragment is an incomplete thought (a dependent or subordinate clause) which cannot stand alone. It is missing something essential to make it a complete sentence.

To fix a fragment, you may 1) attach the fragment to a complete thought, or 2) eliminate the subordinator. To see how to eliminate a subordinator, see example 1 below.

INCORRECT:

Example 1: *If* there is some coffee.

Example 2: *Because* he needed a car.

Example 3: Running down the hallway.

CORRECT:

Example 1: If there is some coffee, I would like a cup. **OR** There is some coffee.

Example 2: Because he needed a car, he saved all his money for two years.

Example 3: Running down the hallway, I tripped on the rug.

What is a comma splice?

A comma splice is a sentence containing two complete thoughts (independent clauses) joined together only by a comma, without a necessary conjunction.

For correct punctuation, follow this pattern: complete thought [, **CONJUNCTION**] complete thought. If you have a comma and no conjunction, you have a comma splice.

INCORRECT:

Example 1: Sara was hungry, she ate an apple.

Example 2: Larry likes Sue, Sue likes Larry.

CORRECT:

Example 1: Sara was hungry, **so** she ate an apple.

Example 2: Larry likes Sue, **and** Sue likes Larry.

What is a run-on?

A run-on is a sentence containing two complete thoughts joined together by a conjunction only, without a comma.

For correct punctuation, follow this pattern: complete thought [, **CONJUNCTION**] complete thought. If you have a conjunction and no comma, you have a run-on.

INCORRECT:

Example 1: Minh had never been in the Writing Center before and he was unfamiliar with our policies.

Example 2: Larry likes to swim and he does it frequently throughout the week.

CORRECT:

Example 1: Minh had never been in the Writing Center before, **and** he was unfamiliar with our policies.

Example 2: Larry likes to swim, **and** he does it frequently throughout the week.

COORDINATION: Three Choices for Combining Complete Thoughts

OPTION 1: Conjunctions known as FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Nora wants to buy a new car	, and	she has enough money.
Nora wants to buy a new car	, but	she doesn't have enough money.
Nora wants to buy a new car	, for	her old car has broken down.
Nora wants to buy a new car	, or	she will have to take the bus.
Nora wants to buy a new car	, so	she has been saving money.
Nora wants to buy a new car	, yet	she will probably buy a used one.

OPTION 2: Semicolon Only.

Nora wants to buy a new car	;	she has enough money.
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OPTION 3: Semicolon and Transition Word.

Nora wants to buy a new car	; however,	she doesn't have enough money.
Nora wants to buy a new car	; furthermore,	she wants a new apartment.
Nora wants to buy a new car	; indeed,	she definitely needs one.
Nora wants to buy a new car	; in fact,	she has been saving for two years.
Nora wants to buy a new car	; moreover,	she needs it by the end of the week.
Nora wants to buy a new car	; nevertheless,	she will settle for a used car.
Nora wants to buy a new car	; then,	she will not have to take the bus.
Nora wants to buy a new car	; therefore,	she will save \$100 per month.

SUBORDINATION: Two Choices for Combining Complete/Incomplete Thoughts

OPTION 1. Nora wants to buy a new car **although** she doesn't have enough money. (*no comma*)

OPTION 2. **Although** she doesn't have enough money, Nora wants to buy a new car. (*comma*)

OPTION 1. Nora wants to buy a new car **after** she has saved enough money. (*no comma*)

OPTION 2. **After** she has saved enough money, Nora wants to buy a new car. (*comma*)

OPTION 1. Nora wants to buy a new car **because** her old car broke down. (*no comma*)

OPTION 2. **Because** her old car broke down, Nora wants to buy a new car. (*comma*)

OPTION 1. Nora wants to buy a new car **when** she has saved enough money. (*no comma*)

OPTION 2. **When** she has saved enough money, Nora wants to buy a new car. (*comma*)

LIST OF COMMON SUBORDINATORS

after	because	how	once	unless	wherever
although	before	if	than	until	whether
as	even if	no matter	that	when	while
as if	even	how	though	whenever	why
as though	though	now that	till	where	