



The University Writing Center

Connecting Writers with Readers

Common Syntax Issues In English

THE PRINCIPLE

Sentences build paragraphs and paragraphs build the body of your essay. Therefore, it is important to make sure each sentence in a paragraph is serving the function of somehow supporting your thesis, argument, or claim. As a result, you want your sentences to be complete, but not **MORE THAN COMPLETE!**

Run-on Sentences:

A run-on sentence consists of two sentences that have been put together improperly as a single sentence. There are several ways to combine two sentences into a single sentence correctly, but a run-on sentence lacks the necessary **LINKING WORD** and/or **PUNCTUATION** necessary for proper grammar.

Example: Susan ran out of the house she forgot her cell phone.

The above example involves two ideas: Susan running out of the house, and Susan forgetting her cell phone. There are various ways to correct this run-on sentence.

Example, Linking Word: Susan ran out of the house **AND** she forgot her cell phone. The linking word **AND** brings the two thoughts together in a grammatically correct way.

Example, Semi-Colon: Susan ran out of the house; she forgot her cell phone.

The use of a **SEMI-COLON (;)**, properly placed, also brings the two thoughts together in a grammatically correct way. **Semi-colons** are often used between closely-connected sentences, and can offer a good solution for run-on sentences.

Example, Period: Susan ran out of the house. She forgot her cell phone.

The use of a **PERIOD (.)** at the end of each idea is also grammatically correct.

Sentence Fragments:

A **sentence fragment** occurs when a sentence is missing either a **subject** or **verb**. These are the basic components of every English sentence. If a sentence lacks any of the previously listed requirements, then it is a **sentence fragment!**

Example (Lacking Subject): Told me to be quiet and stop crying. **WHO** is the subject, and is missing. **WHO** told you?

Revision: My mother told me to be quiet and stop crying.