

True Run-On Sentences

Sometimes when we write, we join a number of sentences together without any stops. When this happens, we form true run-on sentences. This type of run-on happens to most students when they are writing in-class assignments because they are rushed.

Example: Heathcliff married Isabella out of spite he wanted to get back at Catherine for marrying Edgar.

We can fix this by using the following methods:

semi-colon

Heathcliff married Isabella out of spite; he wanted to get back at Catherine for marrying Edgar.

colon

Heathcliff married Isabella out of spite: he wanted to get back at Catherine for marrying Edgar.

Note* In this situation, either a semi-colon or a colon would be appropriate. You may choose to use a semi-colon when the two clauses are closely related in meaning. However, a colon can also be used appropriately here, as it serves to connect an independent clause to the information that the clause is introducing (in this case, the introduced information is a defining example). **See our “Semi-Colons and Colons Handout” for more details about these forms of punctuation.*

using a comma and a co-ordinating conjunction

Heathcliff married Isabella out of spite, for he wanted to get back at Catherine for marrying Edgar.

writing the sentences out separately

Heathcliff married Isabella out of spite. He wanted to get back at Catherine for marrying Edgar.

A different problem can also occur, however. Sometimes, although we are using correct punctuation, we may crowd too many ideas into one sentence. This also results in a true run-on sentence. Generally, it is best not to exceed two ideas per sentence.

Example:

There were still twelve people at the party, but after Janice went home we decided it was time to leave, so we collected our coats and said goodbye to the others, and after a drive home at 50 km/h, we drank coffee and stayed up until three or four in the morning discussing the evening's events.

John's, NL, Canada, A1C 57S.