RUN-ON SENTENCES:

When multiple sentences run into one another without the proper indicators to mark their junction, a run-on sentence occurs. Not only are such sentences incorrect, but they can also be confusing to the reader and can lead to misunderstandings.

SPOTTING RUN-ON SENTENCES:

To determine if a sentence is a run-on, examine the words that precede and follow the potential junction (the place where two ideas connect).

If both parts can stand on their own as complete sentences, then the sentence is a run-on and therefore, incorrect.

Sharks have single circulation all other vertebrates have double circulation.

Here, a junction should occur between the two clauses. Both "Sharks have single circulation" and "all other vertebrates have double circulation" can function as independent sentences. Since there are no indications of the junction between the two sentences, it is a run-on.

WAYS TO CORRECT RUN-ON SENTENCES:

1. Write both clauses as separate sentences:

   Run-on: Sharks have single circulation all other vertebrates have double circulation.
   Revised: Sharks have single circulation. All other vertebrates have double circulation.

2. Join the two sentences with a semicolon:

   Run-on: Pollution levels are rising we must act quickly to find ways to reduce them.
   Revised: Pollution levels are rising; we must act quickly to find ways to reduce them.

   A conjunctive adverb can also be used along with the semicolon:

   Conjunction adverbs: similarly, however, therefore, also, in fact, for example

   Revised: Pollution levels are rising; therefore, we must act quickly to find ways to reduce them.

   Note: A comma must follow the conjunctive adverb
3. Join the two sentences with a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

**Coordinating conjunctions:** and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so

*Run-on:* Pollution levels are rising we must act quickly to find ways to reduce them.

*Revised:* Pollution levels are rising, **so** we must act quickly to find ways to reduce them.

**Note:** A comma is not strong enough to combine two independent clauses on its own. This would lead to a comma splice (see Comma Splices Handout for more information).

4. Join the two sentences by introducing one of them with a subordinating conjunction:

**Subordinating conjunctions:** Because, since, although, if, unless, while, before, during, after, instead of

*Run-on:* Pollution levels are rising we must act quickly to find ways to reduce them.

*Revised:* Pollution levels are rising **so** we must act quickly to find ways to reduce them.

*Run-on:* Newfoundland has many historical attractions it is a great place for tourists to visit.

*Revised:* Because Newfoundland has many historical attractions, **it is a great place for tourists to visit.**

*Run-on:* The student took a gap year she explored her career options.

*Revised:* The student took a gap year **so that** she could explore her career options.

**Note:** If the subordinating conjunction appears in the first clause, a comma is required to separate them. If it appears in the second clause, no comma is needed.

*Run-on:* Sharks have single circulation all other vertebrates have double circulation.

*Revised:* Sharks have single circulation, **while** all other vertebrates have double circulation.

**Exception:** Subordinating conjunctions whereas and **while** functioning in direct opposition adverb clauses use a comma between the two clauses regardless of the order.

**Sources:**


**Contact us**

Writing Centre SN-2053
writing@mun.ca
709-864-3168