

Run-On Sentences and Sentence Fragments

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Introduction to the Topic

Run-on sentences and sentence fragments are mistakes that people sometimes make in their writing. They cause confusion for the reader. In this chapter, you will learn how to avoid or correct run-ons and fragments.

REFRESHING YOUR MEMORY

Recall what you learned in Chapters 1 and 2 about independent clauses, dependent clauses, and sentences.

1. What do all clauses have?
2. Which type of clause can stand alone as a sentence? Which type needs to be attached to another clause?
3. What signals the beginning of a written sentence? What signals its end?

EXPLORING THE TOPIC

Read the two versions of the passage on the next page about nontraditional students, like the ones shown above, in community colleges. Compare the italicized parts. Which version is better? Why?

Helping Nontraditional Students Succeed (Version 1)

Community college programs were originally designed for full-time students in their late teens, single, living at home, and maybe working part time. However, today, in many community colleges, the majority of students are nontraditional. They may be older, and many are studying part time while working full time. *They may get little support from their families, or they may be supporting a family themselves.*

Nontraditional students often find it difficult to fit college into their very full lives. *They need support if they are going to succeed.* Many community colleges now reach out to nontraditional students throughout their college careers. *Colleges provide orientation programs that let students know exactly what is expected of them and where to get help.* They assign students to study groups with others of similar age and circumstances and in similar academic programs. *They give them advisors who work with them until graduation, providing personal, ongoing support.* With such support, nontraditional students can maintain their commitment to college and are likelier to succeed.

Helping Nontraditional Students Succeed (Version 2)

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1 Run-On Sentences

Grammar Point 1

Identifying Run-On Sentences

EXPLORING THE GRAMMAR POINT

Read the following incorrect sentences. How many clauses does each incorrect sentence have? Are they dependent or independent clauses? How are the clauses joined together?

1. **Incorrect:** The class meets twice a week it starts at 10:00 and ends at 12:20.
2. **Incorrect:** We arrive a little early, the instructor arrives at 10:00.
3. **Incorrect:** We are ready she starts the class.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

The incorrect sentences above are *run-on sentences*. Each one has two independent clauses incorrectly joined together in a single sentence. In run-on sentences, independent clauses are joined by nothing or by just a comma.



A run-on sentence contains two or more incorrectly joined independent clauses.

Practice 1.1



In the following paragraph, some sentences are correct and others are run-ons. Underline the places where two independent clauses are incorrectly joined together to make a run-on sentence.

A Crazy Day

Yesterday was a crazy day I was running around from early morning until late at night. My alarm clock went off at 6:00, I jumped out of bed. I got dressed and ran out the door without having breakfast. I couldn't find a parking place on campus I parked eight blocks away. I ran to class I was late anyway. After my classes, I raced back to my car, I had to go to work at MacBuns. At work, the boss told me to work overtime. For the next nine hours, I fried hamburgers and unloaded delivery trucks. I got home my body ached all over. I was disappointed, it was too late to go swimming. I really needed a swim after running around all day.

Grammar Point 2

Correcting Run-On Sentences

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

There are three ways to correct run-on sentences.

1. Separate the two independent clauses to make two simple sentences. Add a period and a capital letter.

Run-on sentence: The class meets twice a week it starts at 10:00 and ends at 12:20.

Two simple sentences: The class meets twice a week. It starts at 10:00 and ends at 12:20.

2. Join the two independent clauses with a coordinator to make a compound sentence.

And, but, and so are coordinators.

Run-on sentence: We arrive a little early, the instructor arrives at 10:00.

Compound sentence: We arrive a little early, and the instructor arrives at 10:00.

3. Add a subordinator* to one independent clause, making it a dependent clause, and join the two clauses to make a complex sentence. If the dependent clause comes first, insert a comma after it.

Run-on sentence: We are ready she starts the class.

Complex sentence: As soon as we are ready, she starts the class.



Correct a run-on sentence by making it two simple sentences, a compound sentence, or a complex sentence.

Practice 2.1



Correct the run-on sentences you identified in Practice 1.1. Try using each of the three ways to correct run-on sentences shown above.

2 Sentence Fragments

Grammar Point 3

Missing Subjects in Simple Sentences

EXPLORING THE GRAMMAR POINT

Read the following pairs of sentences. What is missing from the incomplete sentences?

1. **Incomplete:** Frank works a lot of hours at MacBuns. **Therefore, has little time to hang out with his friends.**

Complete: Frank works a lot of hours at MacBuns. **Therefore, he has little time to hang out with his friends.**

2. **Incomplete:** Jennifer has a great job that she really likes. **Unfortunately, can't take a full course load in college.**

Complete: Jennifer has a great job that she really likes. **Unfortunately, she can't take a full course load in college.**

* For a list of subordinators, see page 25.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

A complete sentence must have a visible subject.* A sentence that does not have some essential part, such as a subject, is called a *sentence fragment*. The incomplete sentences in 1 and 2 do not have subjects. They are sentence fragments.



Every sentence must have a visible subject.*

Practice 3.1



Edit the following paragraph about a famous soccer player. Add the missing subjects.

Pele

Pele is one of the most famous soccer stars in history. ^{He} Came from a poor family. Was born on October 23, 1940, in a small town in Brazil. All the people in the town were poor. Didn't have enough money to buy food every day. Of course, was not enough money to buy a soccer ball. However, Pele's father was very inventive. Tied some old pieces of cloth together to form a ball. The young Pele and the other boys in the neighborhood joyfully played soccer with this rag ball. Played barefoot every day until the sun went down. Later, Pele played soccer on an organized team. Soon became the best player on the team. Before Pele turned thirty, became a millionaire.



Pele

* The exception is imperative sentences like *Watch out!* and *Don't do that.* In imperative sentences, the subject (*you*) is understood but not stated.

Writing Assignment 1

Pele had little education, but he earned a lot of money playing professional sports. Many blue-collar workers, such as house painters or mechanics, do not need a college education. Is it a good idea for all high school graduates to get a college education anyway? Write a paragraph supporting your answer.

Grammar Point 4

Missing Subjects in Dependent Adverbial Clauses

EXPLORING THE GRAMMAR POINT

As you learned in *Chapter 2*, Grammar Point 8, dependent clauses tell something about the independent clause they are attached to. Some dependent clauses function as adverbs and are called *adverbial clauses*.

Each of the following sentences has an adverbial clause in boldface type. What is missing from the incomplete sentences?

1. **Incomplete:** Pele became a millionaire **before turned thirty**.
Complete: Pele became a millionaire **before he turned thirty**.
2. **Incomplete:** Pele earned a lot of money **because was an outstanding player**.
Complete: Pele earned a lot of money **because he was an outstanding player**.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

Like independent clauses, dependent clauses must have visible subjects. In a complex sentence, both clauses must have subjects in order for the sentence to be complete. In the incomplete sentences above, the adverbial clauses lack subjects, so the sentences are sentence fragments.



Every adverbial clause must have a visible subject.

Practice 4.1



Edit the following paragraph for missing subjects.

Thoughts of Dropping Out

Although I am fortunate to be in college full time, ^I sometimes feel like dropping out of school for a while. If weren't in college, I could have a real job and make some real money. I think a lot of people are in college because don't want to face real life, and don't want to be one of those people. I know the time to work is after finish college. However, sometimes just don't feel like waiting.

Grammar Point 5

Missing Subjects in Dependent Adjective Clauses

EXPLORING THE GRAMMAR POINT

Read the following complex sentences from Judy Brady's article "I Want a Wife." Each sentence has a dependent clause in boldface type. In each sentence, circle the word that serves as the subject of the dependent clause.

1. I want a wife **that will pick up after me.**
2. I want a wife **that cooks the meals.**
3. I want a wife **who will keep my house clean.**
4. I want a wife **who takes care of the children.**

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

Some dependent clauses function as adjectives. That is, they tell something about a noun in the independent clause they are attached to. The dependent clauses above are *adjective clauses*, and their subjects are *that* and *who*. Like all clauses, adjective clauses must have a visible subject. If the subject is missing, the clause is incomplete and the sentence is a sentence fragment. Compare these examples:

5. **Incomplete:** Susan B. Anthony was a reformer fought for women's rights.
Complete: Susan B. Anthony was a reformer **who** fought for women's rights.

Use *that*, *who*, and *which* as subjects in adjective clauses, as shown in the chart below.

SUBJECTS IN ADJECTIVE CLAUSES		
Subject	Refers to	Example
that	people or things	The Ivy League is a group of eight prestigious universities that used to accept only men. People that go to Ivy League schools are sometimes called Ivy Leaguers.
who	people	Harry S. Truman was the last American president who did not have a college degree.
which*	things	An elective is a college course which is not required for one's major.



Like all clauses, adjective clauses must have a visible subject.

Practice 5.1

The following sentences about U.S. history and current events contain adjective clauses. Some of the adjective clauses have missing subjects. Add *that*, *who*, or *which* where necessary to make complete sentences.

1. The only American president^{who}resigned from office was Richard Nixon.
2. Watergate was the incident led to President Nixon's resignation.
3. Franklin Roosevelt is the only American president served four terms.
4. The Peace Corps is an agency sends American volunteers to work in foreign countries.
5. The person initiated the first major action of the civil rights movement was Rosa Parks.
6. A draft is a system registers young people for possible military service.
7. Bill Gates is an American businessman became extremely successful.
8. Ralph Nader is a lawyer with an Arab background was an early activist for consumer rights.

* Some instructors may recommend against using *which* as a subject in adjective clauses.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

In conversation, people often use dependent adverbial clauses alone, without joining them to independent clauses. Notice what Bob says in this dialog.

Amy: Why are you looking so sad?

Bob: Because I messed up on my history test.

Amy: How do you know?

Bob: Because Joe, the class genius, said my answers were all wrong.

Amy: When will you know for sure?

Bob: When I get the test back on Monday.

In conversation, adverbial clauses that are not joined to independent clauses can function as complete sentences. This is because the missing independent clause is understood from the questions of the other speaker.

When Amy asks, “Why are you looking so sad?” and Bob answers, “Because I messed up on my history test,” his answer is a dependent clause. It is not a complete sentence. However, it functions as a complete sentence because it is understood as, “I am looking sad because I messed up on my history test.” In writing, however, a dependent clause cannot stand alone. It must be joined to an independent clause.



An adverbial clause is a dependent clause. In written English, it cannot stand alone. It must be joined to an independent clause.

Practice 6.1

Are the following groups of words complete sentences or fragments? Write S for *complete sentence* or F for *fragment*. Then correct each fragment (adverbial clause) by joining it to one of the sentences (independent clauses) next to it to make a logical complex sentence. Rewrite all the sentences in order to form a paragraph.

- F 1. When I go on vacation.
- S 2. I like to have plenty of money.
3. Nice hotels are expensive.
4. When I stay in a cheap hotel, I don't feel comfortable.
5. Because they are often on noisy streets.
6. I don't sleep very well.
7. When I don't sleep well.
8. I can't enjoy daytime activities such as sightseeing and shopping.
9. If you don't have plenty of money for your vacation.
10. Stay at home.
11. Until you save up enough for an enjoyable trip.

Practice 6.2



Correct the fragments in the following passage.

A Real Vacation?

My wife, Martha, is the Director of Admissions for a large university. She works very hard. In fact, she works too hard. Sometimes she works sixty hours a week. I want us to take a vacation together. Because we need some quality time alone, away from her job. Finally, I convinced Martha to go to Hawaii with me for a week. I made all the arrangements ahead of time. Before she could change her mind. At first, Martha was reluctant to leave her work behind. After I arranged everything. She seemed happy with the plan. I didn't want her to do a thing. Because I wanted this to be a real vacation for her. On the day we left, I even carried all her luggage down to the taxi. Before she had a chance to help. As she left the house, she carried only one little thing with her: her laptop computer.

Writing Assignment 2



Write about one of your best or worst vacations or trips. If you have never been on a vacation, write about a place you would like to visit. Begin your paragraph with a topic sentence that identifies the vacation or trip and tells why you have chosen it. Support your topic sentence with plenty of specific details. End your paragraph with a sentence that makes a general statement or says something about your future vacation plans.

Grammar Point 7

Dependent Adjective Clauses Standing Alone

EXPLORING THE GRAMMAR POINT

Which of the following two sentences is correct? Write *correct* and *incorrect* in the blanks.

- _____ 1. Many students get a government loan that they can pay back over ten years.
- _____ 2. Many students get a government loan. That they can pay back over ten years.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

As you already know, dependent clauses cannot stand alone as sentences. This requirement also applies to dependent adjective clauses. Version 1 is a complex sentence with an adjective clause. It is correct. Version 2 is written as two sentences. The second sentence is an adjective clause standing alone. It is a sentence fragment and is incorrect.



An adjective clause is a dependent clause. It cannot stand alone. It must be joined to an independent clause.

Practice 7.1



Rewrite the following sentences to correct the fragments.

1. In community colleges, there are many students. Who work more than 25 hours a week. In community colleges, there are many students who work more than 25 hours a week.
2. I have a few classmates. Who don't work at all. _____
3. Sachiko has a student loan. That covers all her tuition. _____
4. Our college has a financial aid office. Which helps students apply for scholarships. _____
5. Rafael should go and see a financial aid advisor. Who can help him apply for a scholarship. _____

Practice 7.2



Use the words below to create complete sentences with adjective clauses. Use any other words that are necessary.

1. I / have / calculus class / I / really / like
I have a calculus class that I really like.
2. Akbar / has / class / requires / essay / week

3. Manzar / bought / chemistry book / cost / \$95

4. Adrian / wrote / lab report / took / three hours

5. Marisela / wrote / term paper / required / library research

EXPLORING THE GRAMMAR POINT

Read the following pairs of sentences. What is missing from the incomplete sentence in boldface type?

1. **Incomplete:** I'm very busy. **Studying for my calculus exam.**
Complete: I'm very busy studying for my calculus exam.
2. **Incomplete:** I'm very busy. **Especially in my chemistry class.**
Complete: I'm very busy, especially in my chemistry class.
3. **Incomplete:** I'm very busy. **Taking my kids to ballet lessons and soccer practice four days a week.**
Complete: I'm very busy. I take my kids to ballet lessons and soccer practice four days a week.
4. **Incomplete:** I'm very busy. **For example, my job, my classes, and my family.**
Complete: I'm very busy. For example, I have to keep up with my job, my classes, and my family.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR POINT

In each of the incomplete examples above, the sentence in boldface type adds details that make the writing more informative. However, it has neither a subject nor a verb, so it is a sentence fragment. When adding details in writing, it is important to make sure they are expressed in complete sentences.

There are two ways to correct added-detail fragments. You can add the detail to a complete sentence (an independent clause with a subject and verb), as shown in 1 and 2, or you can rewrite the fragment as a complete sentence on its own by adding a subject and a verb, as shown in 3 and 4.



- *Added details cannot stand alone without subjects or verbs.*
- *Correct added-detail fragments by (1) adding the information to a complete sentence, or (2) rewriting the fragment as a sentence.*

Practice 8.1



Underline the fragments in the following paragraph.

Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali was born Cassius Clay on January 17, 1942. In Louisville, Kentucky. The young Cassius showed an early interest in boxing. For example, by taking boxing lessons when he was twelve years old. In 1960, Clay won a gold medal in boxing at the Olympics in Rome. This success launched him on a career in professional boxing. In 1964, Clay became the world champion heavyweight boxer. Beating Sonny Liston in the sixth round of their fight. Then, in a rematch, he beat Liston again. This time by a knockout in the first round. Soon afterwards, Clay became a Muslim. And changed his name to Muhammad Ali.

Practice 8.2



Rewrite the paragraph in Practice 8.1. Correct each fragment by joining it to a complete sentence or by adding a subject and a verb.



Muhammad Ali

CHAPTER 3 REVIEW

Run-On Sentences



- A run-on sentence contains two or more incorrectly joined independent clauses.
- Correct a run-on sentence by making it two simple sentences, a compound sentence, or a complex sentence.

Sentence Fragments



- Every sentence must have a visible subject.
- Every adverbial clause must have a visible subject.
- Like all clauses, adjective clauses must have a visible subject.
- An adverbial clause is a dependent clause. In written English, it cannot stand alone. It must be joined to an independent clause.
- An adjective clause is a dependent clause. It cannot stand alone. It must be joined to an independent clause.
- Added details cannot stand alone without subjects or verbs.
- Correct added-detail fragments by (1) adding the information to a complete sentence, or (2) rewriting the fragment as a sentence.

Review Practice 3.1



Edit the following paragraph to correct run-on sentences and sentence fragments.

My First Day of College

My first day of classes at Miami Dade Community College was a disaster. Everything was fine. Until I got to the campus. The parking lot on Twenty-Seventh Avenue was full there was no place for me to park. Since I wanted to be on time. I panicked and parked in a staff space. Near the Administration Building. As I ran toward my English class, I looked back and saw the campus police. Giving me a ticket. Next, I discovered that I didn't have my class schedule with me, I didn't remember the room number. The schedule was in my car there were only a few seconds before the class was supposed to start. In a greater panic, I ran back to the car. As fast as I could. When I reached into my pocket for my keys, they were not there. They were in the car. Which was locked! As a result, I missed my first class. In the future, I plan to get to school. With plenty of time to spare.

Review Practice 3.2



Edit the following passage to correct run-on sentences and sentence fragments.

A Folk Tale: The Tiger's Whisker

Yun Ok was unhappy in her marriage. Because her husband did not treat her with consideration. He didn't pay attention to her. When he spoke to her. He was impolite. Yun Ok became so unhappy that she decided to consult a famous wise man had helped many people. For example, marital problems and other types of family problems.

The unhappy young woman explained her situation to the old man, he thought very carefully. And then answered. The old man told Yun Ok that he could solve her problem. If she first brought him the whisker of a living tiger. Yun Ok trembled with fear after a few minutes she agreed to do as he asked.

That night, Yun Ok went out to the mountainside to the cave of a ferocious tiger lived there. She took food with her. That a tiger would like. She put the food at the entrance to the cave. Then she waited at a distance. While the tiger ate. For several months, Yun Ok brought food for the tiger, gradually the tiger got used to Yun Ok. Little by little, she moved closer to the tiger until could almost touch the beast. Finally, Yun Ok asked the tiger for one of his whiskers, he agreed.

As fast as she could, Yun Ok raced back to see the old man. In her hand, she held the tiger's whisker. The cure for her unhappiness. Yun Ok handed the precious whisker to the old man, he immediately tossed it into the fire.

"What are you doing?" she cried. "You've thrown away my last hope!"

"No," answered the old man. "If you know how to tame a vicious tiger, surely can do the same with your husband."

Yun Ok returned home slowly. Thinking about the old man's advice.

Review Practice 3.3



Edit the following passage to correct run-on sentences and sentence fragments.

Fighting Procrastination

One of the most common time management problems is procrastination. Means not doing something until the last minute. Or until it is actually too late. For example, writing a research paper. A student may not begin until the night before the assignment is due. When is not enough time to finish.

Getting started is the most difficult step for procrastinators. Let's suppose that you are procrastinating about doing a writing assignment. Break the assignment down into parts or steps this makes the task more manageable. Even if you work on it only twenty minutes a day. Will make some progress.

Here are some tips for beating procrastination:

1. Start immediately. Before start thinking of reasons to delay. Once you start, is easier to keep going.
2. Don't try to be perfect, can always make revisions later. If you need to. In fact, all good writers revise their material.
3. Guard against temptations to escape. Aren't really hungry and don't really need to make that phone call right now.
4. Work with another person. For example, if you're brainstorming ideas. Do it with a classmate. This will help you keep working, and you may even get some ideas will improve your writing.