Sentences:
Easy Fixes for Common Mistakes

Purpose
Sentence structure is important in all aspects of writing. However, sentences can easily become complicated. This packet includes the common sentence structure mistakes and how each of them can be fixed.
Sentence Fragments

A sentence fragment is a result of one of the following problems:

- a missing subject
- a missing verb
- fails to complete the thought is started

Fix that Fragment:

- Begin by identifying the fragments in your writing by reading the sentences out loud. Make sure that it contains a verb and a subject.
- Ask yourself, if you walked up to a stranger and said the sentence to them would it sound like a complete thought? Or would they be waiting for you to finish?

Examples of Missing Subjects:

Incorrect:
- Was running late that day.
- Biking and swimming after work on Thursday.

Correct:
- I was running late that day.
- Bob is biking and swimming after work on Thursday.

Examples of Missing Verbs:

Incorrect:
- The birch trees with their rattling yellow leaves.

Correct:
- The birch trees with their rattling yellow leaves *swayed* in the wind.
NOTE: Some verbs require helpers, in order to be complete. These “helpers” include *is, are, was, were, will be, or has been*.

Incomplete Verb:
- Caroline studying her sociology tonight at Moxie’s downtown.

Complete Verb:
- Caroline will be studying her sociology tonight at Moxie’s downtown.

Examples of Unfinished Thoughts:

Incorrect:
- Because tuition increased again this year.

Correct:
- Because tuition increased again this year, Blaine got a second job as a Student Assistant.

OR
- Blaine must take fewer credits because tuition increased again this year.

NOTE: Contrary to belief, it’s perfectly okay to start a sentence with *because*; you just have to finish what you’re saying in the same sentence.

TIP: An easy way to fix an unfinished thought is to look and see if you can combine the fragment with the sentence before or after it. If not, then make sure to add the missing information.

Run-on Sentences

Occurs when there is a lack of punctuation when two independent clauses are fused together.
Example:

- I am a woman I am a truck driver.

There are MANY ways to correct a run-on sentence. It just depends on the tone and rhythm that you are trying to achieve.

If you want two completely separate sentences, you could use a **period**.

- I am a woman. I am a truck driver.

If you want more of a connection between the two clauses, you could use a **semicolon**.

- I am a woman; I am a truck driver.

If you want to **comment** on the connection between the two thoughts, you could use a **conjunction** with a **comma**.

- I am a woman, and I am a truck driver.

**OR**

- I am a woman, yet I am a truck driver.

You could even use a **conjunctive adverb** with a **semicolon** and a **comma**.

- I am a woman; nevertheless, I am a truck driver.

There are still more ways to fix a run-on sentence. The point is that there must be **something** to connect the two clauses together.

**Comma Splices**

- “Splice” is defined as - to join together or to connect.
- “Commas aren’t meant to join main clauses all by themselves; to force them into that role is to perpetrate a comma splice” - Grammar Girl.
- There are three ways in which to correct this comma splice: a **semicolon**, a **period** or a **coordinating conjunction**.
If two sentences are closely related to each other, you can connect them by using a **semicolon**.

Incorrect:
- Sara obviously named that one, she was a sucker for those old “Happy Days” reruns.

Correct:
- Sara obviously named that one; she was a sucker for those old “Happy Days” reruns.

The semicolon makes sense in this example because the second clause expands on the reasoning of the first clause.

**TIP:** It is a semicolon’s job to splice complete sentences together.

You could use a **coordinating conjunction** to fix a comma splice.

Incorrect:
- Squiggly ran to the forest, Aardvark chased peeves.

Correct:
- Squiggly ran to the forest, and Aardvark chased peeves.

One more example on how each of these methods can be used to correct a comma splice.

Incorrect:
- They were getting it, he had them.

**Period:**
- They were getting it. He had them.

**Semicolon:**
- They were getting it; he had them.

**Coordinating Conjunction:**
- They were getting it, and he had them.
Resources:
2. https://www.butte.edu/departments/cas/tipsheets/grammar/run_ons.html