

What, Why, and How?

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GRAMMAR

Run-Together Sentences

Run-Together Sentences (RTS)

What are they?

Contrary to popular belief, run-together sentences are not simply sentences that are too long. Instead, run-together sentences are the result of combining two or more **complete sentences** together without an **acceptable joiner**.

Connections
See also the “Subject & Verb Identification,” “Coordination,” and “Subordination.”

A **complete sentence**, also known as an **independent clause**, contains a subject-verb unit and can stand alone.

Acceptable joiners for connecting independent clauses include:

- Coordinators (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
- Subordinators (words such as although, since, when, even though, if)
- Semi-colons (;)

We'll look at these acceptable joiners more closely in a moment, but first let's take a look at what CANNOT connect complete sentences. In the example sentences below, subjects are underlined once and verbs underlined twice so you can see the different independent clauses.

Problem	RTS example:
Commas cannot connect two complete sentences—this type of RTS also referred to as a <i>comma splice</i>	His older <u>sister</u> <u>hit</u> him, the <u>boy</u> <u>started</u> to cry.
Transition words , with or without a comma, cannot connect two complete sentences—this can be another type of <i>comma splice</i>	He <u>took</u> four ibuprofen, <u>then</u> his <u>headache</u> <u>faded</u> away.
Not using anything to connect complete sentences is also incorrect—this is also known as a <i>run-on sentence</i>	My <u>teacher</u> <u>writes</u> RTS in the margins of my essay <u>I</u> <u>do</u> not <u>know</u> what she means.

Since it is easy to confuse transition words with coordinators and subordinators, we've included a chart on the next page to help you out.

Logical Relationship	Coordinators (CAN join sentences)	Subordinators (CAN join sentences)	Transition Words (CANNOT join sentences)
Addition	and		also, further, additionally, furthermore, moreover, similarly
Contrast	but, yet	although, while, even though, even if, whereas, though	however, still, nevertheless, otherwise, on the other hand, instead, nonetheless, alternatively
Cause	for	because, since	
Effect	so	so that, in that, in order that	therefore, thus, consequently, hence, as a result
Choice/ Alternative	or, nor		on the other hand, conversely
Condition		if, unless, provided that	otherwise
Time		after, before, as soon as, since, when, while, until, as	then, next, previously, subsequently, afterwards

How to Fix Run-Together Sentences

Use a coordinator (also known as a conjunction)

One way to fix a run-together sentence is to insert a comma and a coordinator to join the two independent clauses. For example:

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
Her older <u>sister</u> <u>hit</u> him, the <u>boy</u> <u>started to cry</u> .	His older <u>sister</u> <u>hit</u> him, so the <u>boy</u> <u>started to cry</u> .

When you use a coordinator to fix a run-together sentence, make sure that you choose one that indicates the correct logical relationship between the two ideas you are connecting; the chart on the previous page can help you figure this out.

Use a subordinator

Another way to fix a run-together sentence is to use a subordinator to join the two independent clauses. For example:

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
<u>He took</u> four ibuprofen, his <u>headache faded</u> away.	His <u>headache faded</u> away as soon as <u>he took</u> four ibuprofen. As soon as <u>he took</u> four ibuprofen, his <u>headache faded</u> away.

As you can see from the examples above, subordinators don't always need to be placed in the middle of sentence; they can also come at the beginning. When you do place the subordinator at the beginning of a sentence, you need to put a comma after the end of the first clause.

As with coordinators, when you use a subordinator to fix a run-together sentence, you need to make sure that you choose one that indicates the correct logical relationship between the two ideas you are connecting.

Use a semi-colon

A third way fix run-together sentences is by joining the two independent clauses with a semi-colon.

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
My <u>teacher</u> <u>writes</u> RTS in the margins of my essay <u>do</u> not <u>know</u> what she means.	My teacher writes RTS in the margins of my essay; (however,) I don't know what she means.

You can pair a semi-colon with a transition word, but remember that transition words alone *cannot* join sentences. If you do use a transition word, be sure that it is one that indicates the correct logical relationship between the ideas you are connecting.

Split the RTS into two sentences

One final way to fix a run-together sentence is to spit it up into two independent clauses. For example:

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
My <u>teacher</u> <u>writes</u> RTS in the margins of my essay <u>do</u> not <u>know</u> what she means.	My teacher writes RTS in the margins of my essay. I don't know what she means.

When you fix run-together sentences in this way, just be careful that you don't end up with a series of short, choppy sentences.

PRACTICE

A) Fix the following run-together sentences using one of the seven coordinators (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

yet

For example: I don't usually watch reality TV, ^ I do love a show called *Project Runway*.

1. At the beginning of the season there are fourteen aspiring fashion designers, in the end only three people get to show at Olympus Fashion Week in New York.
2. The supermodel Heidi Klum hosts, famous designers serve as guest judges.
3. The contestants must take the design challenges seriously every week the loser goes home.
4. Some of the contestants have huge egos, they are unnecessarily competitive.
5. I don't have TiVo I am going to my friend's house to watch the season finale.

B) Fix the following run-together sentences using a **subordinator**.

since

For example: ^ Many students have to cover their own living expenses, they work full-time.

1. She needed a part-time job, books and tuition were expensive this year.
2. She would have preferred not to have to work retail, the only job she could find was at a shoe store in the mall.
3. The customers were frequently demanding and rude, she liked her co-workers.
4. She had been working for a month, her employee discount kicked in.
5. She paid off her credit card bill, she was planning to buy a new pair of shoes.

C) Fix the following run-together sentences using a semi-colon; you can also include an appropriate transition word.

For example: As people get older they tend to get wiser; sometimes they also get fatter.

1. Orville was almost thirty-five his tummy had started to stick out.
2. His wife worried that his eating habits were unhealthy, she tried to encourage him to eat more fruits and vegetables.
3. Orville was not as concerned he would eat six cookies a meal without feeling guilty.
4. On the radio, Orville had heard that drinking green tea could help you lose weight he decided to stop drinking coffee that very day and put his coffee machine away.
5. Only he didn't really stop drinking coffee, he just stopped making it at home and went to the neighborhood café instead.

D) The following sentences are taken from actual student essays. Fix the RTS errors using an appropriate strategy; remember to think about the logical relationship between ideas when choosing a strategy.

1. The legalization of prostitution would actually help reduce crime, the prostitute wouldn't be a victim of extortion or beatings.
2. Police could stake out a street crime area instead of a brothel the effect would be safer streets and more efficient use of the police.
3. Not everybody is going to be so ambitious and work many will probably do nothing.
4. At one time people had responsibilities to their families and communities, now you only have to answer to yourself and no one else.
5. To some, divorce provides an easy out to their problems of getting along together, therefore they dissolve the marriage rather than work it out.

E) Now that you've had a chance to correct isolated sentences, try to find and fix the run-together sentences in the following paragraph.

Sleep is a subject we should all know a lot about, we spend one third of our lives sleeping. Even though everyone sleeps, scientists have only recently begun to understand what goes on when we sleep. They used to believe that the body repairs itself while asleep, there is some truth to this but the body also does this while awake. The brain does not simply shut itself off at night, it goes through a complicated series of chemical changes. Scientists have begun to chart these changes, working with complex instruments that measure brain-wave patterns. They have found that we do not move smoothly from being awake to being asleep, we pass through a cycle of four sleep stages. At each stage blood pressure and pulse rate drop, the body temperature also goes down. In the second stage the number and length of brain waves go up, while the sleeper's eyes begin to move rapidly back and forth behind their lids. Scientists call this activity rapid eye movements, or REMs, the activity that accompanies most of our dreaming. If a person is deprived of REM sleep, that person will soon become bad-tempered and irritable. A full night's sleep is not a single, unbroken state but consists of four or five of these multi-stage sleep cycles.¹

¹ Altman, Pam and Doreen Deicke, Eds. Fog City Fundamentals, 4th ed. Pearson Custom Publishing: Boston. 1998 p. 19. Sill need to correctly format citation.

F) One more time! Some of the sentences in the following paragraph are run-together; find these sentences and fix them using the most appropriate strategy.

In 1867, a chef at a hotel in Saratoga Springs accidentally dropped some thinly sliced potatoes into hot cooking oil, instantly the world found a new delicacy: the potato chip. At the time, Saratoga Springs was America's most fashionable resort, fads that started there usually found immediate success. Almost overnight, the potato chip became Saratoga's hottest item. The wide, tree-lined avenues were filled with people eating potato chips, the huge veranda of the United States Hotel was no different; it was filled with chip-eaters too. Some of the richest, most powerful people in the world consumed them regularly, for instance, the Vanderbilts could often be seen daintily plucking chips from paper cups on their stroll back to their mansion. The elegant "Saratoga chips" remained the delicacy of the wealthy until 1925, when the first chip factory was constructed in Albany, New York. The potato chip was no longer the snack of only the rich and famous, it became a common household item. Of course potato chips have changed a great deal in the last hundred years, now they come in various textures and flavors, some even stacked in paper tubes. Still, the next time you grab a handful of greasy, flavor-dusted chips, you might pause to remember the noble origins of that humble food.



Run-Together Sentences Answer Key

Note that in correcting RTS errors, you will often have had a choice between two or more equally logical coordinators or subordinators; therefore, where appropriate, several possibilities are given for each sentence.

Exercise A

1. At the beginning of the season there are fourteen aspiring fashion designers, *but/yet* in the end only three people get to show at Olympus Fashion Week in New York.
2. The supermodel Heidi Klum hosts, *and* famous designers serve as guest judges.
3. The contestants must take the design challenges seriously every week, *for* the loser goes home.
4. Some of the contestants have huge egos, *so* they are unnecessarily competitive.
5. I don't have TiVo, *so* I am going to my friend's house to watch the season finale.

Exercise B

Although the original order of sentences has been retained in this answer key, you could also reasonably switch the order of ideas, so that the subordinate clause comes first, or vice-versa. This is demonstrated with the first sentence.

1. She needed a part-time job *because* books and tuition were expensive this year.
OR
Because books and tuition were expensive this year, she needed a part-time job.
2. *Although/even though/though/while* she would have preferred not to have to work retail, the only job she could find was at a shoe store in the mall.
3. *Although/even though/though/while* the customers were frequently demanding and rude, she liked her co-workers.
4. *When/after/as soon as* she had been working for a month, her employee discount kicked in.
5. *When/after/as soon as* she paid off her credit card bill, she was planning to buy a new pair of shoes.

Exercise C

In the following sentences, using a transition word—the words in brackets—is optional.

1. Orville was almost thirty-five; his tummy had started to stick out.
2. His wife worried that his eating habits were unhealthy; [*therefore*] she tried to encourage him to eat more fruits and vegetables.
3. Orville was not as concerned; he would eat six cookies a meal without feeling guilty.
4. On the radio, Orville had heard that drinking green tea could help you lose weight; he decided to stop drinking coffee that very day and put his coffee machine away.
5. Only he didn't really stop drinking coffee; [*instead*] he just stopped making it at home and went to the neighborhood café instead.

Exercise D

1. The legalization of prostitution would actually help reduce crime *because* the prostitute wouldn't be a victim of extortion or beatings.

OR

The legalization of prostitution would actually help reduce crime, *for* the prostitute wouldn't be a victim of extortion or beatings.

2. *If* police could stake out a street crime area instead of a brothel, the effect would be safer streets and more efficient use of the police.
3. Not everybody is going to be so ambitious and work; many will probably do nothing.
4. *Although/even though/though/while* at one time people had responsibilities to their families and communities, now you only have to answer to yourself and no one else.

OR

At one time people had responsibilities to their families and communities, *but/yet* now you only have to answer to yourself and no one else.

5. To some, divorce provides an easy out to their problems of getting along together; therefore they dissolve the marriage rather than work it out.

Exercise E

Only the run-together sentences from the original paragraph have been reproduced below.

1. Sleep is a subject we should all know a lot about, *for* we spend one third of our lives sleeping.

OR

Sleep is a subject we should all know a lot about *because* we spend one third of our lives sleeping.

2. They used to believe that the body repairs itself while asleep; there is some truth to this, but the body also does this while awake.

3. The brain does not simply shut itself off at night, *but* it goes through a complicated series of chemical changes.

OR

The brain does not simply shut itself off at night; it goes through a complicated series of chemical changes.

4. They have found that we do not move smoothly from being awake to being asleep, *but* we pass through a cycle of four sleep stages.

OR

They have found that we do not move smoothly from being awake to being asleep; [instead,] we pass through a cycle of four sleep stages.

5. At each stage blood pressure and pulse rate drop, *and* the body temperature also goes down.

OR

At each stage blood pressure and pulse rate drop; the body temperature also goes down.²

² Altman, Pam and Doreen Deicke, Eds. Fog City Fundamentals, 4th ed. Pearson Custom Publishing: Boston, 1998.

Exercise F



ANSWERS

1. In 1867, *when* a chef at a hotel in Saratoga Springs accidentally dropped some thinly sliced potatoes into hot cooking oil, instantly the world found a new delicacy: the potato chip.
OR
In 1867, a chef at a hotel in Saratoga Springs accidentally dropped some thinly sliced potatoes into hot cooking oil; instantly the world found a new delicacy: the potato chip.
2. At the time, Saratoga Springs was America's most fashionable resort, *and* fads that started there usually found immediate success.
OR
At the time, Saratoga Springs was America's most fashionable resort, *so* fads that started there usually found immediate success.
3. The wide, tree-lined avenues were filled with people eating potato chips, *and* the huge veranda of the United States Hotel was no different; it was filled with chip-eaters too.
OR
The wide, tree-lined avenues were filled with people eating potato chips. The huge veranda of the United States Hotel was no different; it was filled with chip-eaters too.
4. Some of the richest, most powerful people in the world consumed them regularly; for instance, the Vanderbilts could often be seen daintily plucking chips from paper cups on their stroll back to their mansion.
5. The potato chip was no longer the snack of only the rich and famous, *for* it became a common household item.
6. Of course potato chips have changed a great deal in the last hundred years; now they come in various textures and flavors, some even stacked in paper tubes.³

³ Ibid.