ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Comma splices

Difficulty level: Intermediate

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how you stop two complete sentences from being glued together with just a comma. A comma is too weak to join two full sentences, so the result reads like a run-on and confuses your reader. Learning to spot a comma splice is what turns choppy, breathless writing into sentences that land properly.



Rule

A comma alone cannot join two complete sentences.

Two sentences joined by only a comma is a comma splice. Fix it with a semicolon, a conjunction (a joining word like and, but or so), or a full stop.

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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Fix this comma splice: I like coffee, it is delicious.

SOLUTION

Check: are both sides complete sentences? 'I like coffee.' Yes. 'It is delicious.' Yes.

Two complete sentences need more than a single comma holding them together.

Fixed: I like coffee; it is delicious. (or: I like coffee because it is delicious.)

EXAMPLE 2

Q Fix this comma splice: The class went to the museum, I joined them.

SOLUTION

Check: are both sides complete sentences? Yes, both can stand alone.

A comma alone cannot join them.

Fixed: The class went to the museum, and I joined them.

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Practice questions

1

Fix: She ran fast, she won the race.

A She ran fast, or she won the race.

B She ran fast, and she won the race.

C She ran fast, but she won the race.

D She ran fast she won the race.

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2

Fix: It was late, we went home.

A It was late, or we went home.

B It was late, but we went home.

C It was late, so we went home.

D It was late we went home.

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3 Fix: He is tall, his brother is taller.

- **A** He is tall, but his brother is taller.
- **B** He is tall, or his brother is taller.
- **C** He is tall, so his brother is taller.
- **D** He is tall his brother is taller.

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4 Fix: We ate dinner, we watched a film.

- **A** We ate dinner, or we watched a film.
- **B** We ate dinner, but we watched a film.
- **C** We ate dinner, so we watched a film.
- **D** We ate dinner, and we watched a film.

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5 Fix: The dog barked, the baby woke up.

- **A** The dog barked, or the baby woke up.
- **B** The dog barked, and the baby woke up.
- **C** The dog barked, but the baby woke up.
- **D** The dog barked the baby woke up.

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6 Fix: I read the book, it was excellent.

- **A** I read the book, or it was excellent.
- **B** I read the book, but it was excellent.
- **C** I read the book, and it was excellent.
- **D** I read the book it was excellent.

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7 Fix: They practised daily, they improved.

A They practised daily, and they improved.

B They practised daily, or they improved.

C They practised daily, but they improved.

D They practised daily they improved.

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8

Fix: The rain stopped, the sun came out.

A The rain stopped, or the sun came out.

B The rain stopped, but the sun came out.

C The rain stopped, so the sun came out.

D The rain stopped, and the sun came out.

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9

Fix: She saved money, she bought a bike.

A She saved money, or she bought a bike.

B She saved money, so she bought a bike.

C She saved money, but she bought a bike.

D She saved money she bought a bike.

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10

Fix: We left at noon, we arrived at two.

A. We left at noon, or we arrived at two.

B. We left at noon, but we arrived at two.

C. We left at noon, and we arrived at two.

D. We left at noon we arrived at two.

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ANSWER KEY

1. She ran fast, and she won the race. (or a semicolon or two sentences)
2. It was late, so we went home.
3. He is tall, but his brother is taller.
4. We ate dinner, and we watched a film.
5. The dog barked, and the baby woke up.
6. I read the book, and it was excellent. (or a semicolon)
7. They practised daily, and they improved.
8. The rain stopped, and the sun came out.
9. She saved money, so she bought a bike.
10. We left at noon, and we arrived at two.

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