ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Run-on sentences

Difficulty level: Intermediate

English, Literacy, and Communication

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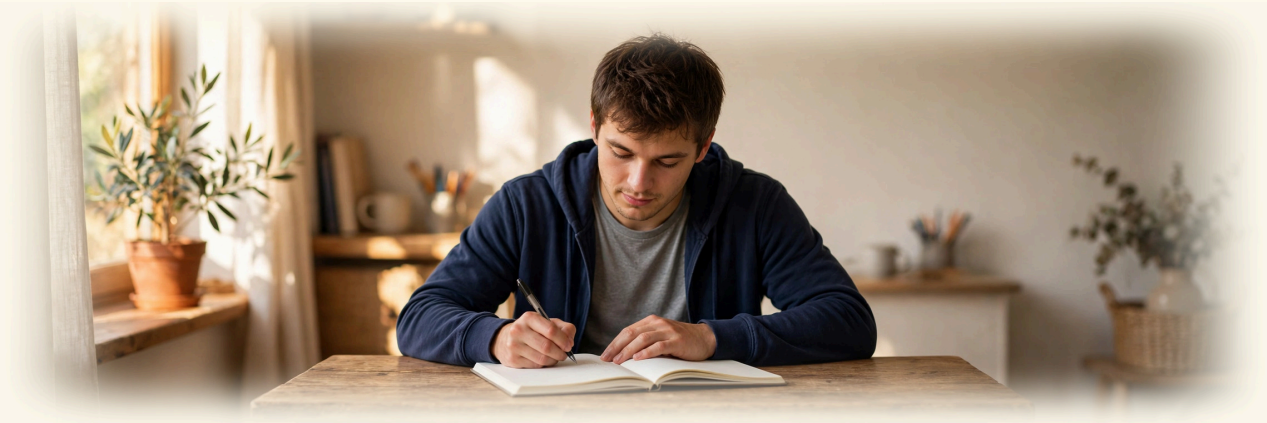
Overview of the concept

This is how you keep two complete thoughts from running together, so a reader never has to guess where one idea ends and the next begins. A sentence that runs on and on without a break makes the reader work hard just to follow it, and the meaning gets lost in the middle. An email, an essay, and a story all read better when each sentence holds one complete thought and then stops. Breaking a run-on into two sentences is a small fix that makes writing far easier to read.



Rule

A run-on sentence joins two complete ideas without proper punctuation.

Fix it by splitting it into two sentences, or by joining the ideas with a comma and a joining word like and, but, or because.

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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Fix this run-on: I went to the store we needed milk.

SOLUTION

Find the two complete ideas: 'I went to the store.' and 'We needed milk.'

Join them properly: add a comma and 'because' for the reason, or split them into two sentences.

Fixed: I went to the store because we needed milk.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Fix this run-on: She ran fast she missed the bus.

SOLUTION

Find the two complete ideas: 'She ran fast.' and 'She missed the bus.'

Join them with a comma and 'but' for the contrast.

Fixed: She ran fast, but she missed the bus.

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Practice questions

1 Fix this run-on by joining the two parts with a comma and a joining word: I like tea I drink it every day.

- **A** I like tea, and I drink it every day.
- **B** I like tea, but I drink it every day.
- **C** I like tea and I drink it every day.
- **D** I like tea, I drink it every day.

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2 Is this a run-on sentence? 'The sun set the stars came out.'

- **A** Yes, it joins two complete ideas without punctuation
- **B** No, it is one complete idea
- **C** No, it has a comma
- **D** Yes, it has too many words

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Fix this run-on: He studied hard he passed the test.

A He studied hard, but he passed the test.

B He studied hard, so he passed the test.

C He studied hard, he passed the test.

D He studied hard so he passed the test.

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4 Which of these is a run-on sentence?

- A. We were hungry. We made sandwiches.
- B. We were hungry we made sandwiches.
- C. We were hungry, so we made sandwiches.
- D. We were hungry, but we made sandwiches.

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5 Which two complete ideas are joined in this run-on: 'It rained we stayed inside.'?

- A. 'It rained' and 'we stayed inside'
- B. 'It' and 'rained we stayed inside'
- C. 'It rained we' and 'stayed inside'
- D. 'It rained' and 'inside'

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Which of these is NOT a run-on sentence?

A Sara sings Tom plays guitar.

B Sara sings, and Tom plays guitar.

C Sara sings Tom plays.

D Tom plays guitar Sara sings.

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7

Fix this run-on: The book was long it was good.

A The book was long, so it was good.

B The book was long, it was good.

C The book was long, but it was good.

D The book was long but it was good.

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Is this a run-on sentence? 'I called her, but she did not answer.'

A No, it is joined correctly with a comma and 'but'

B Yes, it joins two ideas

C No, it is one idea

D Yes, it needs a full stop

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What is wrong with this sentence: 'We left early we arrived on time.'?

A Two complete ideas are joined without punctuation

B It has no verb

C It is too short

D It has a spelling mistake

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10 **How many complete ideas are in this run-on: 'He fell down he got up again.'?**

A 2

B 1

C 3

D 4

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ANSWER KEY

1. I like tea, and I drink it every day.
2. Yes, it joins two complete ideas without punctuation
3. He studied hard, so he passed the test.
4. We were hungry we made sandwiches.
5. 'It rained' and 'we stayed inside'
6. Sara sings, and Tom plays guitar.
7. The book was long, but it was good.
8. No, it is joined correctly with a comma and 'but'
9. Two complete ideas are joined without punctuation
10. 2

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