

Sentence Structure

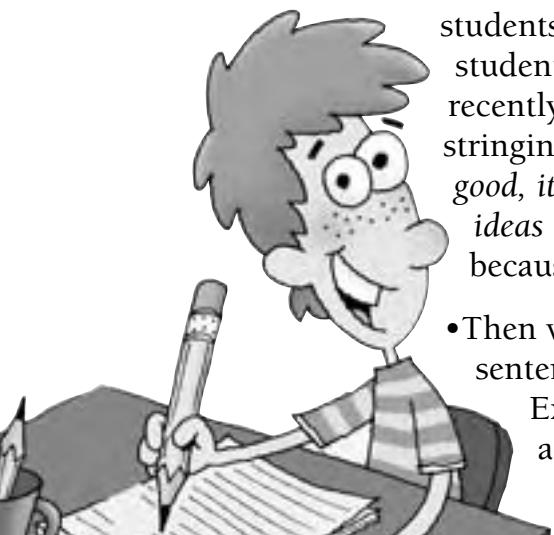


Background

One of the most common mistakes in sentence structure is the run-on sentence. A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought or idea. A run-on sentence tries to carry too many ideas at once, making it “run on” way too long. Run-on sentences also occur when two or more ideas are linked together improperly, or without the correct punctuation. For instance: *The monster’s name was Bernard, he had orange polka dots on his back.* Run-on sentences can be corrected by dividing the ideas into separate sentences (*The monster’s name was Bernard. He had orange polka-dots on his back.*) or by adding a conjunction (*The monster’s name was Bernard, and he had orange polka-dots on his back.*). If the ideas are closely related, a semicolon may also be used. *The No-Good, Rotten, Run-on Sentence* provides students with the tools they need to recognize—and correct—errors in sentence structure.

Before Reading

- Introduce the topic by providing students with the following definition: *A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought or idea.* Based on this definition, can students guess what a run-on sentence is? Provide an example by inviting students to share their thoughts and ideas about a movie they’ve seen recently, or a book they’ve read. Then write a sentence on the board, stringing their ideas together to create a run-on. For instance: *The movie was good, it had great special effects, awesome costumes.* Ask: *How many different ideas can you find in this sentence?* Explain that this is a run-on sentence because all the ideas “run” together.
- Then work with students to correct the run-on by giving each idea its own sentence, for instance: *The movie was good. It had great special effects.* Explain that run-on sentences can also sometimes be corrected by adding a word such as *but, yet, for, or and:* *The movie had great special*



effects and awesome costumes. Be sure to point out that run-on sentences don't have to be long: any sentence that improperly links two or more ideas is a run-on.

- Next, show students the cover of the book and invite them to make predictions about what happens when Kevin tries to write a story.

During Reading

After reading the story once through for meaning, you can reinforce a variety of concepts in subsequent readings.

- Invite students to follow Kevin's run-on sentence throughout the story illustrations. Challenge them to identify each separate thought or idea in the sentence.
- Challenge students to edit Kevin's run-on sentence as they read. Invite them to suggest places where a new sentence might begin, or where a connecting word might be added.

After Reading

In addition to the group overhead lesson and mini-book practice activities, try the following extensions to help reinforce students' learning.

- Help students "tame" their own no-good, rotten, run-on sentence. In advance, write an outrageously long run-on sentence on a roll of adding machine tape. Roll the tape back up and gather the group together. Tell them that you are about to unleash an out-of-control sentence, and that their job will be to make it more manageable by breaking it up. Provide students with scissors and pencils. Then let the roll unfurl across the floor and let students get to work!
- Reinforce the idea that a sentence need not be long to be a run-on. Write a short run-on sentence on the board, such as *I'm hungry, let's eat*. Invite students to explain why the sentence is a run-on (it improperly links two ideas) and suggest a way to correct it (break it into two sentences). Then invite students to work with a partner to see who can come up with the shortest run-on.

To Extend Learning



Use the activity on the next page to reinforce and extend the concepts students have learned. You can turn this into a collaborative class activity by using the page on an overhead projector, or make multiple copies for students to work on individually.

- Have students read the directions at the top of the sheet. Then have them read the story and identify the separate ideas in each sentence.
- Invite students to correct the run-ons by rewriting the story on the lines. They can create separate sentences by adding periods and capital letters. They can also make use of connecting words such as *but, yet, because, or and*.

Run-ons Run Wild!

Sentence
Structure

A run-on sentence is a sentence that tries to carry way too many ideas. Run-on sentences are also caused by linking two or more ideas improperly, or without the correct punctuation.



The paragraph below is riddled with run-ons! Rewrite the story on the lines to correct the run-on sentences. Remember these tips:

- You can divide ideas into separate sentences by adding periods and capital letters.
- You can link ideas properly by using connecting words such as *but*, *yet*, *because*, or *and*.

Kevin Crabtree decided to write a new story, this one was about a monster named Gertrude the Gabber. No one listened to Gertrude at the Monster Meetings, she talked too much. Everyone said that her sentences went on and on there was just no stopping her! Then she met a monster named Edwin the Editor he told her all she needed was a pencil to shorten her sentences. Gertrude didn't believe him, she tried it at the next meeting. Now Gertrude is an excellent speaker, she's also the Monster Club's new secretary!

Try This!

Kevin's story had a lot of good ideas, but they were all crowded into one sentence. You can write your own no-good, rotten, run-on sentence and then fix it yourself! Just let your ideas flow out on the paper. Don't worry about punctuation. Then go back and fix your story by breaking it into separate sentences and adding correct punctuation. Which version looks better?

Grammar Tales!

Sentence Structure

The No-Good, Rotten, Run-On Sentence

BY LIZA CHARLESWORTH
ILLUSTRATED BY DOUG JONES



Do you know what a run-on sentence is? Share your ideas.

One day, Kevin Crabtree had a great idea for a story. But when he sat down to write it, the very first sentence refused to behave. It ran and ran and ran. In fact, it ran right off the page and out of his bedroom!

Grammar Tales



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A



But Kevin had to get his thoughts down, so he just kept writing. A minute later, he heard a crash. Then, his sister Darcy burst in. "What's the deal with that sentence?" she asked. "It ran through the kitchen and knocked over my cereal. Then it ran out the open window!"

B

11. **U.** Kevin doesn't run after his sentences anymore. He runs on the track team instead!

V. Kevin doesn't run after his sentences anymore, he runs on the track team instead!

Now crack the code! Each number below stands for one of the questions. Write the letter of the correct answer above each number. Then read your secret message!

You don't let run-ons give you _____
10 4 3

_____ !
9 11 7 1 9 8 11 7 2

21

4. **G.** Kevin chased after the sentence, his sister followed close behind.

H. Kevin chased after the sentence, and his sister followed close behind.

5. **I.** Mrs. Smoodle's dog tried to catch it the run-on sentence was too fast for him.

J. Mrs. Smoodle's dog tried to catch it, but the run-on sentence was too fast for him.

6. **K.** Cowboy Cal couldn't catch it, his lasso was too short.

L. Cowboy Cal couldn't catch it because his lasso was too short.

7. **M.** Kevin ran as fast as he could, finally, he caught that pesky sentence.

N. Kevin ran as fast as he could. Finally, he caught that pesky sentence.

Rule Out Run-ons! Look at each set of sentences. Fill in the circle next to the sentence that is not a run-on. Then use the letters of your answers to decode the secret message at the end.

1. A. Kevin Crabtree was bored, so he decided to write a story.
 - B. Kevin Crabtree was bored, he decided to write a story.
-
2. C. He had a lot of great ideas, before he knew it he had written the longest sentence in the world!
 - D. He had a lot of great ideas. Before he knew it, he had written the longest sentence in the world!
-
3. E. Kevin tried to keep his sentence on the paper, but it ran right out the front door.
 - F. Kevin tried to keep his sentence on the paper, it ran right out the front door.

18

3



A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought or idea. A run-on sentence crowds too many ideas into one sentence, or doesn't link them with proper punctuation.

Kevin put down his pencil. "I don't know what's wrong. My story idea is fantastic, but the first sentence just keeps going and going and going..."

"I think I get the idea. Don't worry. I'll catch it," replied Darcy, who was the fastest runner in all of Blathertown.



And that's exactly what she did. After that, Kevin never had a problem with a run-on sentence again. And his excellent story was published to rave reviews, with a great big dedication to dear Miss Bartlebine.

16



Along came Mrs. Smoodle and her dog, Lightning. "What's all the commotion?" she asked.

"Kevin is writing a story and his first sentence will not stop," yelped Darcy. "I tried to catch it, but it just keeps running!"

(Answer: yes)

5

Let's Review: Sentence Structure



Darcy put on her running shoes and darted out the door. She passed a skateboarder and a biker and a bus. She huffed and puffed, but she just couldn't catch that no-good, rotten, run-on sentence!

④



"Oh my! That's soooo rude!" declared Mrs. Smoodle. "This sounds like a job for Lightning. After all, he's the fastest dog in all of Blathertown. He'll get that no-good, rotten, run-on sentence or his name's not Lightning-Sweetie-Pie-Shmoopie Smoodle III." Then she pointed her finger at the sentence and commanded, "Fetch, boy!"

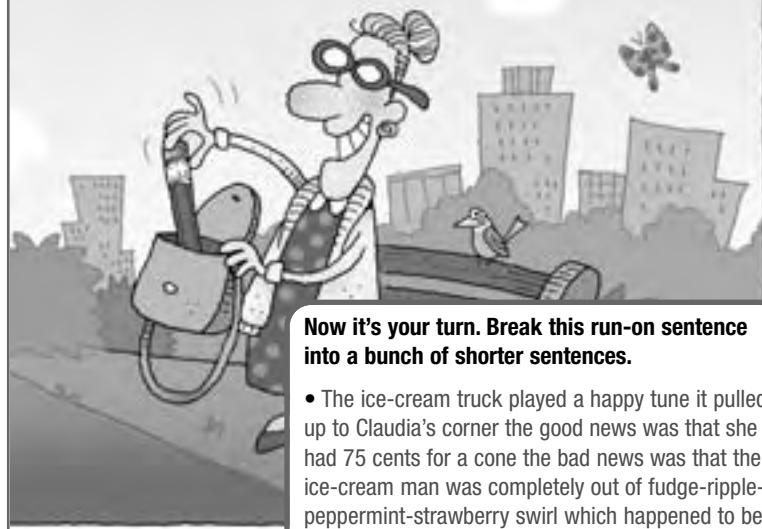
C

Using proper sentence structure helps make ideas clear and keeps readers from getting confused. A run-on sentence happens when there is a mistake in sentence structure.

- ★ A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought or idea. A run-on sentence is a sentence that tries to include too many ideas at once, making it "run on" way too long. Run-on sentences also occur when two or more sentences are linked together improperly, or without the correct punctuation.
- ★ One way to fix a run-on sentence is to divide it into two smaller ones. For instance: *The monster's name was Bernard, he had orange polka dots on his back.* That sentence can be divided into two separate ideas: *The monster's name was Bernard. He had orange polka dots on his back.*
- ★ Another possible way to fix a run-on sentence is by adding a word like *but, yet, for, because, or and.* For instance: *The monster's name was Bernard, and he had orange polka dots on his back.*
- ★ Remember, a run-on sentence doesn't have to be long! Any sentence that improperly links ideas, even short ones, is a run-on. Here's an example: *Come inside, it's raining.* Can you think of two different ways to correct it?

⑯

of orange spots on his skin. When he was done, he stood in front himself. Now, it was time to find Timothy. When Timothy saw Melvin, did those orange spots come from?" he exclaimed. Timothy was Melvin the Monster, especially his beautiful, red spotless skin.



Now it's your turn. Break this run-on sentence into a bunch of shorter sentences.

- The ice-cream truck played a happy tune it pulled up to Claudia's corner the good news was that she had 75 cents for a cone the bad news was that the ice-cream man was completely out of fudge-ripple-peppermint-strawberry swirl which happened to be her favorite flavor.

She then returned the pencil to her purse, declaring, "My work here is done. Now, let's go over and visit Kevin. I'd like to give him a little grammar lesson."

⑯

⑯

Melvin the Monster took a paintbrush and carefully dabbed hundreds of the full-length mirror. "Wow, I really look different!" he said to himself. He was so surprised that he nearly hit the ceiling. "Wherever, wherever, I'm upset. You see, he loved everything about

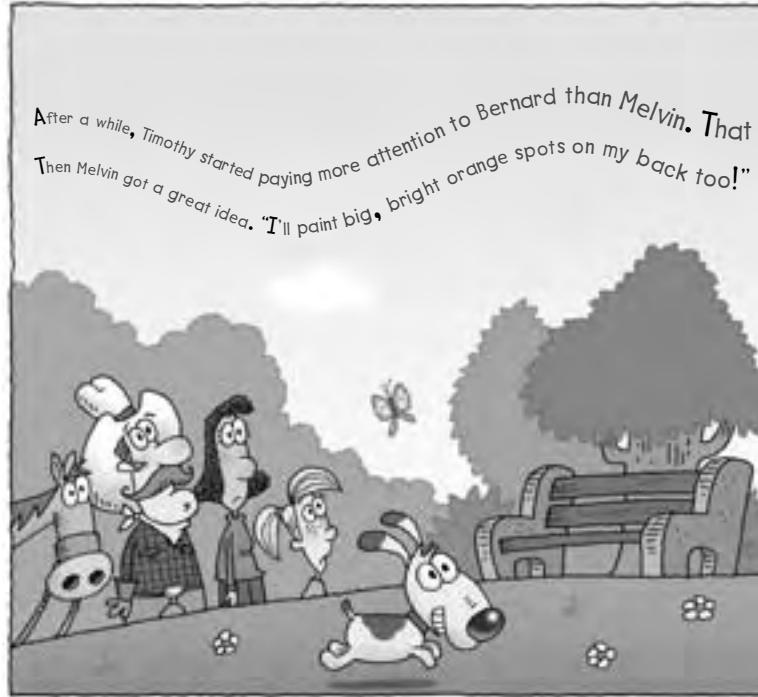


"How did you do that?" Darcy exclaimed.

"Well, when a sentence keeps going and going, it becomes what is known as a run-on sentence. Run-on sentences are good sentences gone bad. Ideas get confused. Readers get lost. It's NOT a pretty sight," sighed Miss Bartlebine.

(14)

After a while, Timothy started paying more attention to Bernard than Melvin. That Then Melvin got a great idea. "I'll paint big, bright orange spots on my back too!"



"A pencil?" they exclaimed. "That's no match for the no-good, rotten, run-on sentence." Next, Miss Bartlebine did an amazing thing: She pointed the pencil at the sentence and started editing. She broke it apart into smaller sentences. She added capital letters and commas and periods and question marks and even an exclamation point or two.

(12)



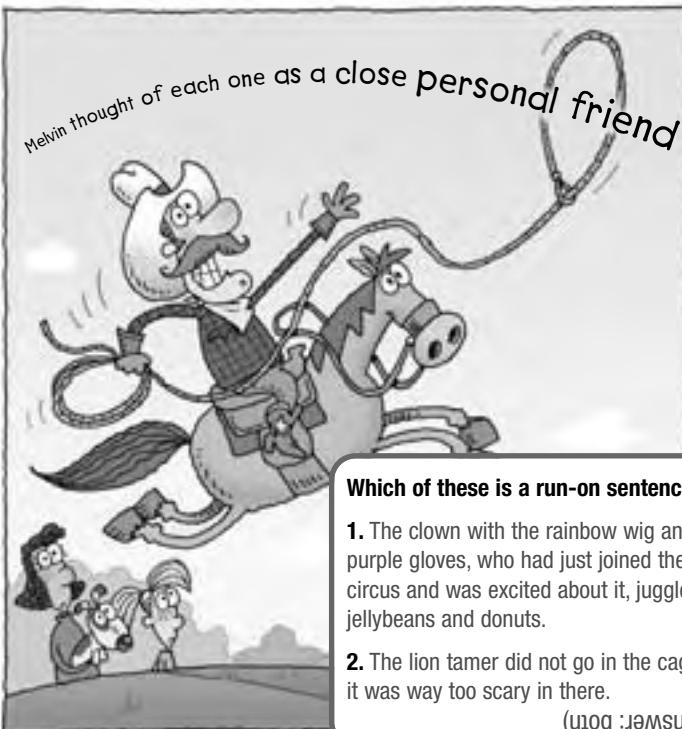
Is this a run-on sentence?

The king ate his pudding, it was quite tasty.

(Answer: yes)

As expected, Lightning took off like a flash. He passed a jogger and a roller skater and a pizza delivery truck, but it was no use. He just couldn't catch that no-good, rotten, run-on sentence.

(7)



Which of these is a run-on sentence?

1. The clown with the rainbow wig and purple gloves, who had just joined the circus and was excited about it, juggled jellybeans and donuts.
2. The lion tamer did not go in the cage, it was way too scary in there.

(Answer: both)

"Why, I'll get that ornery, disrespectful gaggle of words if it's the last thing I do," said Cowboy Cal. He twirled his lasso this way and that and took expert aim. But to his surprise, that no-good, rotten, run-on sentence slipped right through the rope and kept on going!

(9)

there were so many dust bunnies under there and



Along came Cowboy Cal on his horse. "Howdy, partners. Why the long faces?"

"Kevin is writing a story and his first sentence keeps running and not even Lightning can catch it!" explained Mrs. Smoodle.

8

reluctantly Melvin decided to let Bernard stay as long as he agreed



"Look! It's heading for the center of town!" gulped Darcy. With no time to spare, the four of them hopped on Cowboy Cal's horse and galloped toward Town Square.

F

Made Melvin get pretty jealous, but what could he do? he thought. That way, I'll be just as handsome as Bernard.



Sometimes you can fix run-on sentences by adding a word like *but*, *yet*, *for*, *because*, or *and*. Can you fix these sentences with one of them?

1. The woodchuck was always late to school, his alarm clock was broken.

2. The chipmunk was funny, the squirrel was funnier.

Then before you knew it, that no-good, rotten, run-on sentence was no more. And in its place were dozens of tidy, clear, perfectly polite sentences—along with the start of a darn good story.

13

to hide under Timothy's bed when his mom came in



By the time they arrived, everyone had scattered to the safety of their homes. Everyone, but Dear Miss Bartlebine. "Watch out!" they screamed. "It's Kevin's no-good, rotten, run-on sentence!"

"Oh that silly thing," she replied calmly. "I'll take care of it." Then she reached inside her purse and pulled out a red pencil.

11

How to Assemble the Mini-Books

- 1 Make double-sided → copies of the mini-book pages. You should have three double-sided copies for each book.

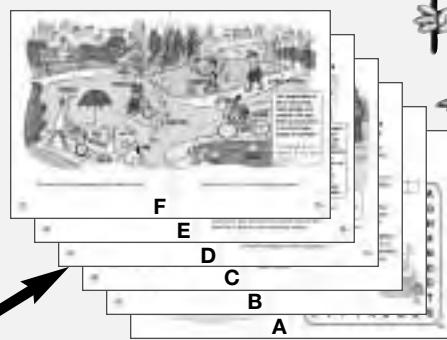


- 2 Cut the pages in half along the dotted line.



- 3 Position the pages with the lettered spreads (A, B, C, D, E, F) face up. Place the B spread on top of the A spread. Then, place the C, D, E, and F spreads on top of those in sequence.

- 4 Fold the pages in half along the solid line. Make sure all the pages are in the correct order. Then staple them together along the book's spine.



Sentence Structure: The No-Good, Rotten, Run-on Sentence

Run-ons Run Wild! (Overhead, page 95)

Possible answer:

Kevin Crabtree decided to write a new story. This one was about a monster named Gertrude the Gabber. No one listened to Gertrude at the Monster Meetings because she talked too much. Everyone said that her sentences went on and on. There was just no stopping her! Then she met a monster named Edwin the Editor. He told her all she needed was a pencil to shorten her sentences. Gertrude didn't believe him, but she tried it at the next meeting. Now Gertrude is an excellent speaker, and she's also the Monster Club's new secretary!

Rule Out Run-ons! (Mini-Book, page 18)

- 1.** A; **2.** D; **3.** E; **4.** H; **5.** J; **6.** L; **7.** N;
- 8.** O; **9.** R; **10.** T; **11.** U

Message:

You don't let run-ons give you the runaround!