

Run-On Sentence

Definition of Run-On Sentence

A run-on sentence is a combination of two independent clauses, joined together without a conjunction or punctuation mark. Both of these independent clauses form a complete sense or thought; however, when they group together, they need proper punctuation for clarity. For instance, in the sentence, “It is now ten we cannot go there before early morning,” two complete thoughts are joined together in a confusing manner.

Generally, this is considered grammatically incorrect, and called a stylistic error. There are many examples of run-on sentences used as [literary devices](#) in literature. However, not all long sentences are run-on sentences, for it is quite acceptable to combine different related ideas into a compound sentence. Nevertheless, without using appropriate punctuation rules, a compound sentence becomes a run-on sentence.

Types of Run-On Sentence

Comma Splice Run-On Sentence

In this type, a comma splits two independent clauses. However, the position of this comma is a bit weak to make a complete relationship between two complete sentences. Thus, it requires a proper coordinating conjunction to make a relationship. For instance:

“People are mingling, everybody looks so happy.”

This would be much clearer if the conjunction “and” were added, for:

“People are mingling, and everybody looks so happy.”

Fused Sentence

This occurs when a writer connects two clauses with no punctuation, where the main clause makes perfect sense on its own. Independent clauses should not be smashed together into a fused sentence. For instance:

“A wise man makes his own decisions an ignorant man follows public opinion.”

Punctuation between these two independent clauses would make this sentence more clear:

“A wise man makes his own decisions. An ignorant man follows public opinion.”

Examples of Run-On Sentence from Literature

Example #1: *Rabbit, Run* (By John Updike)

“But then they were married (she felt awful about being pregnant before but Harry had been talking about marriage for a while and anyway laughed when she told him in early February about missing her period and said Great she was terribly frightened and he said Great and lifted her put his arms around under her bottom ... she was still little clumsy dark-complected Janice Springer and her husband was a conceited lunk who wasn’t good for anything in the world Daddy said and the feeling of being alone would melt a little with a little drink.”

This passage presents an example of fused run-on sentences, where the author has not used commas to separate the sentences. These sentences, however, can make a proper thought.

Example #2: *A Tale of Two Cities* (By Charles Dickens)

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness. it was the spring of hope. it was

the winter of despair... —in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the [superlative](#) degree of [comparison](#) only.”

This excerpt is a good example of comma splices, where we can clearly see the use of commas separating the clauses. Yet, there is no use of conjunction to form a complete sense or thought.

Example #3: *Ulysses* (By James Joyce)

” ... I hate people that have always their poor story to tell everybody has their own troubles that poor Nancy Blake died a month ago of acute pneumonia well I didn’t know her so well as all that she was Floeys friend more than mine ... “

This novel is very popular for using run-on sentences. Notice in this example Joyce has used a fused sentence with no commas. Though understandable, the meaning is not clear.

Example #4: *The Sound and the Fury* (By William Faulkner)

“My God the cigar what would your mother say if she found a blister on her mantel just in time too look here Quentin we’re about to do something we’ll both regret I like you liked you as soon as I saw you I says he must be ...”

This excerpt is a perfect example of fused run-on sentences, where we find neither commas nor use of conjunction that could separate the clauses and give clarity.

Function of Run-On Sentence

Though it is not a good idea to use run-on sentences in writing, poets and writers sometimes use them for repeating something important, or for imitating the speaking [style](#) of characters. Despite that, use of run-on

intricate to understand. However, intentional use of run-on sentences creates special effects in colloquial speech and informal contexts.