

To understand comma splices you must understand grammatical terms like "clause" and "independent clause."

Some people use the term "run-on sentence" to refer both to fused sentences and comma splices. These two terms refer to two different errors.

Definition: A **comma splice** is a comma that joins (splices) two independent clauses. A **clause** is a group of words that has a subject and a verb.

A **fused sentence** (<http://www.grammar-worksheets.com/Lesson.Fused.Sentences.pdf>), on the other hand, occurs when two independent clauses (complete ideas) are joined without any punctuation. It is better to avoid the term **run-on sentence** altogether and use only the terms **comma splice** and **fused sentence**. They are more specific and more descriptive.

In standard written American English, comma splices are not allowed. In other English-speaking communities, they are more accepted. If you are writing for a North American audience, it is important to avoid comma slices.

Example of an Independent Clause: Robert ate worms.

This is a clause. Robert is the subject, and ate is the verb. This clause is "independent" because it can stand alone as a sentence. Now let's take another independent clause:

Another Independent Clause: Mary dislikes Robert.

If you take two independent clauses and join them with a comma, you have a **comma splice**:

Comma Splice: Robert ate worms, Mary dislikes Robert.

To "splice" means to join, so a comma splice could easily have been called a comma JOIN, but that would have been too simple. Some people get confused and think that the word "splice" means to "separate," as in "split" + "slice" = "splice." But it is not that way.

To splice means to join, and in standard American English, you're not supposed to use comma splices in writing. It is a formal rule. Comma splices are easy errors for teachers and editors to notice.

How Do You Fix a Comma Splice?

- Make two sentences instead of one: Robert ate worms. Mary dislikes Robert.
- Use a semicolon (;). Robert ate worms; Mary dislikes Robert.
- Use a **subordinating conjunction** (because, when, since, although,...). Because Robert ate worms, Mary dislikes Robert.
- Use a semicolon plus a **conjunctive adverb** (therefore, then, however,...). Robert ate worms; therefore, Mary dislikes Robert.
- Use a **coordinating conjunction** (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**) – fanboys – after the comma. Robert ate worms, so Mary dislikes Robert.

Remember, you can't use words like however and so just because they make grammatical sense. These words mean something. The words although, however, but, and yet indicate a contrast: I was on a diet; **however**, I still gained weight.

The words because, therefore, and so indicate a cause and effect relationship. The words and and then indicate that you are simply adding information. Use words cautiously.

Exercises: Each sentence below is wrong; it has a comma splice. Please correct it.

1. Each sentence below is wrong, it has a comma splice.

2. Eliza ran to the store, then she bought some candy.

3. The stock market has moved in one direction lately, it has gone down.

4. Elvis Presley was a great singer, he was never really accepted by the country music's mainstream.

5. Computer programs help us live saner lives, obviously the people who write them should make lots of money.

6. Dubai has built magnificent office towers with luxuries and conveniences, it is considered a great location in which to conduct international business.

7. Brazil has won several world cups championships in soccer, they are always considered a good team.

8. The Quaid-i-Azam campus of Punjab University is considered excellent, it attracts many students.
