

Lessons & Quiz:

Compound Sentences, Fragments, Run-Ons, & Comma Splice Errors

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Lesson 1: What Is a Complete Sentence?

A complete sentence, also called an **independent clause**, is a group of words that meets two conditions: 1.) contains a verb with a subject **and** 2.) expresses a complete thought.

1. A “verb with a subject” means that there is a verb and there is something or someone doing or being what the verb says.

For instance,

Complete sentence: <i>(a.k.a. independent clause)</i>	NOT a sentence:
He washed his t-shirts. <i>(The verb washed has a subject; he is doing the washing.)</i>	Baking for my friends. <i>(The verb baking does not have a subject; who or what is doing the baking is not named.)</i>

2. “Expresses a complete thought” means that there is no information missing or that the reader is not left “hanging.”

For instance,

NOT a sentence:

Even though she arrived late.

(There is a verb, arrived, and it has a subject, she. However, the reader is left to wonder about something; information is missing.)

Fyi, since this group of words includes a subject and a verb, it is classified as a clause, but since it cannot stand on its own, it is called a **dependent clause**.

3. A “fragment” is a group of words that begins with a capital letter and ends with a period but does NOT have a verb-subject pair and/or does not express a complete thought. A fragment is also called an “incomplete sentence.”

Exercise 1 - Complete Sentences vs. Fragments

Directions - Circle only the complete sentences below. For each fragment that you spot, circle the problem or problems that prevent it from being a complete sentence.

Which sentences are complete?	What makes the fragments <u>in</u>complete?	
<i>Circle only the <u>complete</u> sentences (independent clauses) below. (Six of the sentences below are complete.)</i>	<i>For each <u>fragment</u>, circle the problem(s) you notice. (There are a total of four fragments.)</i>	
1. While he ran through the park in the pouring rain.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
2. With a smile on her face she opened the gift.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
3. Quietly, he stared out the window.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
4. On the top shelf the dusty old book.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
5. They jumped.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
6. Facing a deadline of two hours.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
7. She made her decision without hesitating.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
8. A faint sound could be heard.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
9. Hidden beneath the pile of clothes.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought
10. With a sigh of relief he sank into the comfortable chair.	No verb-subject pair	Not a complete thought

Exercise 1 **KEY** - Complete Sentences vs. Fragments

Directions - Circle only the complete sentences below. For each fragment that you spot, circle the problem or problems that prevent it from being a complete sentence.

Which sentences are complete?	What makes the fragments <u>in</u> complete?	
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Lesson 2: Recognizing & Punctuating Compound Sentences

1. A **compound sentence** is a sentence that contains two or more complete sentences/independent clauses within it.

For instance,

The dishwasher was full, so I started the wash cycle.

Complete sentence/independent clause #1: The dishwasher was full.

Complete sentence/independent clause #2: I started the wash cycle.

2. When combining two independent clauses into a single *compound* sentence, the “glue” that connects the sentences is either

a comma and a conjunction:

The dishwasher was full, **so** I started the wash cycle.

(Other conjunctions that can be used: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet*)

OR a semi-colon:

The dishwasher was full; I started the wash cycle.

3. For complete sentences that have multiple ideas, actions, events, etc. **that do not include multiple, separate independent clauses**, do NOT use punctuation.

The comma + conjunction or semi-colon “glue” is only used to connect multiple independent clauses.

For instance,

We crossed the road and found the trail head to the mountain pass.

My friend was late for school and missed his first period class.

Neither sentence above contains multiple, separate complete sentences/independent clauses within it, and, therefore, neither sentence requires punctuation.

More examples:

A.

That truck is huge, **and** it is going too fast!

Independent clause #1: That truck is huge.

Independent clause #2: It is going too fast!

Glue: , **and**

B.

She tried to call time out, **but** the referee did not see her.

Independent clause #1: She tried to call time out.

Independent clause #2: The referee did not see her.

Glue: , **but**

C.

November was a very cold month; no more leaves are on the trees.

Independent clause #1: November was a very cold month.

Independent clause #2: No more leaves are on the trees.

Glue: ;

D.

This bedroom is huge and incredibly bright in the daytime.

Independent clause #1: This bedroom is huge.

Independent clause #2: (There isn't another, separate complete sentence/ independent clause! "Incredibly bright in the daytime" is a fragment.)

Glue: (None needed!)

Exercise 2 - Recognizing & Punctuating Compound Sentences

Part 1: Circle the fragments below.

1. Jean enjoyed the movie.
2. After he edited the photos from our trip.
3. On their anniversary next Tuesday.
4. Roasted on the charcoal grill.
5. I slept.

Part 2: Put an "X" in the boxes next to the compound sentences.

- 6. It was raining, but the sidewalks still teemed with shoppers.
- 7. I don't enjoy water skiing or surfing at the beach by my grandma's house.
- 8. You can sit on the couch and enjoy a hot cup of tea.
- 9. The elephants gathered near the river's edge, and they scared off the lions.

Part 3: Add punctuation only where necessary.

10. The racers streamed down the home stretch and lunged across the finish line.

11. No one wanted the s'mores so we made hot dogs instead.

12. The bus was late again we would not reach home until after dark.

13. Trent understood the concepts well and was becoming very confident about the test.

14. Our team's guards could not get open or find clear passing lanes.

15. No one expected Lena to succeed and the crowd gasped when she took the lead.

Exercise 2 **KEY** - Recognizing & Punctuating Compound Sentences

Part 1: Circle the fragments below.

1. Jean enjoyed the movie. (2) After he edited the photos from our trip.

(3) On their anniversary next Tuesday. (4) Roasted on the charcoal grill. 5. I slept.

Part 2: Put an "X" in the boxes next to the compound sentences.

- 6. It was raining, but the sidewalks still teemed with shoppers.
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Lesson 3: Avoiding Run-On Sentences

1. If you compose a compound sentence but forget the proper “glue” between the independent clauses within it, you may have created a “**run-on sentence**,” which is frowned upon in advanced academic writing. **A run-on sentence is a compound sentence that omits the necessary comma or semi-colon.**

For instance,

The drinks in the cooler became warm so we stopped to buy some
ice.

I love chocolate and I don't understand why you abhor it!

He smiled warmly it was a gesture of kindness.

2. The run-on sentence examples above may seem to be minor errors to many people, but as one's writing gets more complex and sentence after sentence ignores basic punctuation rules, such errors have a way of spoiling a reader's experience.

For instance,

Derick's annoyance with Ricardo's tiresome babbling overwhelmed his better judgement and soon enough he found himself looking Ricardo over from head to foot from his scuffed shoes up to his greasy unkempt hair the rage boiled inside of him. Derick's round eyes narrowed fists plunged deeper into his pockets and he felt himself losing control but thankfully Teresa appeared and encouraged the men to come out to the patio for some fresh air and Derick was released from the awful verbal prison.

3. It is not pleasant to be subjected to paragraph after paragraph, page after page of such breathless writing!

Lesson 4: Avoiding Comma Splice Errors

1. A “**comma splice**” error is a particularly cringe-worthy mistake. **A comma splice error is a compound sentence that omits the necessary conjunction, using instead only a comma between independent clauses.**

For instance,

Robin enjoyed cooking, she hated the cleanup afterward.

You may need a warmer jacket, it will be cold tonight.

Someone forgot to turn off the lights, will you please flip the switch?

2. Compound sentences are necessary components to include in your writing, for they are a very simple way to create flow with a variety of sentence lengths. Consider the passages below, the first of which does not include any compound sentences and the second which does:

A. *Thomas began to sense that this class period would be difficult. Miss Johnson had already written several instructions on the board. She was continuing to add more. The concepts covered yesterday swam confusingly in Thomas’s mind. He had a slight grasp of a few. He did not understand most. He grabbed his backpack and rummaged around for a pencil and an eraser. He began to panic. He suddenly realized that he may have left them on the kitchen table at home. Miss Johnson put the board marker down. She turned toward the class. Her expression was firm. She scanned the room. Her gaze paused momentarily on Thomas. She knew he was in trouble. Thomas gulped.*

B. *Thomas began to sense that this class period would be difficult. Miss Johnson had already written several instructions on the board, and she was continuing to add more. The concepts covered yesterday swam confusingly in Thomas’s mind. He had a slight grasp of a few, but he did not understand most, and he grabbed his backpack and rummaged around for a pencil and an eraser. He began to panic; he suddenly realized that he may have left them on the kitchen table at home. Miss Johnson put the board marker down. She turned toward the class, and her expression was firm. She scanned the room. Her gaze paused momentarily on Thomas. She knew he was in trouble. Thomas gulped.*

3. And so, **please remember how to properly connect independent clauses (complete sentences) when combining them in a compound sentence: Use a comma AND a conjunction, or use a semi-colon. That is that!**

Exercise 3 - Recognizing Run-On Sentences & Comma Splice Errors

Part 1: On the blank line before each sentence, identify each sentence as either a run-on sentence (RO) or a sentence with a comma splice error (CS).

- _____ 1. The bags are packed and we are ready to go!
- _____ 2. Everything she told us is true, I'm not surprised.
- _____ 3. These videos are funny but they are also misleading.
- _____ 4. I will not eat this ham sandwich for I am a vegetarian.
- _____ 5. Many items were on sale but I could not find anything nice in my size.

Part 2: Add one punctuation mark or one conjunction to each incorrect sentence below. One sentence is correct and does not need adjusting.

6. Mica could not lend me a pen in English class so I decided to compose my essay on my laptop instead.

7. Last night I began to watch cat videos, I lost track of time and did not complete the math homework.

8. We set up camp next to the lake at sunset the mosquitoes devoured us.

9. I can go with you but Nate cannot go.

10. The snake slithered up the tree trunk and wrapped itself around a thick branch.

Exercise 3 **KEY** - Recognizing Run-On Sentences & Comma Splice Errors

Part 1: On the blank line before each sentence, identify each sentence as either a run-on sentence (RO) or a sentence with a comma splice error (CS).

- RO 1. The bags are packed and we are ready to go!
- CS 2. Everything she told us is true, I'm not surprised.
- RO 3. These videos are funny but they are also misleading.
- RO 4. I will not eat this ham sandwich for I am a vegetarian.
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Quiz: Compound Sentences, Fragments, Run-Ons, & Comma Splice Errors

name: _____

Part 1: Put an "X" on each line that is next to a fragment or improperly punctuated item.

- _____ 1. Since you were late to our game.
- _____ 2. She found three bananas in the cupboard and made a smoothie with them.
- _____ 3. Bruce offered to wash my car, so I bought him lunch.
- _____ 4. At camp I kept dreaming about werewolves, I did not get much sleep.
- _____ 5. When he goes to the store to shop for a suit for his interview.
- _____ 6. I don't like sports movies; you may have to see that one by yourself.
- _____ 7. Yesterday we walked to Madisonville, and ran into our good friend Maggie.
- _____ 8. I can make cupcakes or brownies for Theo's birthday party.

Part 2: Below, create properly punctuated compound sentences by combining the given independent clauses. If adding a word, choose from only the following conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*.

9. My teacher told us to study hard tonight. I have two soccer games an hour away.

10. Kayaks are difficult to navigate in rapids. I'm not surprised yours flipped over twice.

11. I love Pop Tarts. My mom refuses to buy them.

Quiz **KEY**: Compound Sentences, Fragments, Run-Ons, & Comma Splice Errors

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Part 1: Put an "X" on each line that is next to a fragment or improperly punctuated item.

- X 1. Since you were late to our game.
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- X 4. At camp I kept dreaming about werewolves, I did not get much sleep.
- X 5. When he goes to the store to shop for a suit for his interview.
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9. My teacher told us to study hard tonight. I have two soccer games an hour away.

OPTIONS:

A. My teacher told us to study hard tonight, but I have two soccer games an hour away.

B. My teacher told us to study hard tonight; I have two soccer games an hour away.

10. Kayaks are difficult to navigate in rapids. I'm not surprised yours flipped over twice.

OPTIONS:

A. Kayaks are difficult to navigate in rapids, so I'm not surprised yours flipped over twice.

B. Kayaks are difficult to navigate in rapids; I'm not surprised yours flipped over twice.

11. I love Pop Tarts. My mom refuses to buy them.

OPTIONS:

A. I love Pop Tarts; my mom refuses to buy them.

B. I love Pop Tarts, but my mom refuses to buy them.