

S Sentence Boundaries

S1 Comma Splices

For practice, go to bedfordstmartins.com/theguide/csplice

In a comma splice, two **independent clauses** are improperly joined by a comma.

— INDEPENDENT — — INDEPENDENT CLAUSE —
CLAUSE

COMMA SPLICE I know what to do, I just don't know how to do it.

Because a comma splice can be edited in many ways, first consider how the ideas in the two independent clauses relate. For example, are they equally important, or does one depend on or explain the other? Then select the strategy below that will best clarify this relationship for a reader. To edit the example just given, for example, the writer might change the comma to a period.

- ▶ I know what to do. I just don't know how to do it.

Add a **subordinating conjunction** to one of the clauses, rewording as necessary.

- ▶ ^{After} The New York City police began to crack down on minor offenders, a significant decrease in major crime resulted as well.
- ▶ ^{Though} *Midnight Cowboy* was rated X in the early 1970s, it contained one scene that was considered “sexually explicit,” yet the movie was tastefully done and could not be considered pornographic by today's standards.

By beginning a clause with a subordinating conjunction, you indicate that the clause is subordinate to — and dependent on — the main clause. Usually, the **dependent clause** explains or qualifies the **independent clause**. Select the subordinating conjunction carefully so that it tells the reader how the ideas in the dependent clause relate to the ideas in the independent clause.

Separate the independent clauses with a comma and a **coordinating conjunction**.

- ▶ On the album *Other People's Songs*, Erasure has produced an eclectic collection of cover treatments, and the result highlights the group's strengths and weaknesses throughout its thirty-year recording career.

independent (main) clause A word group with a subject and a predicate that can stand alone as a separate sentence. (A predicate is the part of a clause that includes a complete verb and says something about the subject.)

subordinating conjunction A word or phrase (such as *although*, *because*, *since*, or *as soon as*) that introduces a dependent clause and relates it to an independent clause.

dependent (subordinate) clause A word group that has a subject, a predicate, and a subordinating word (such as *because*) at the beginning; it cannot stand by itself as a sentence but must be connected to an independent (main) clause.

coordinating conjunction A word that joins comparable and equally important sentence elements: *for*, *and*, *or*, *but*, *nor*, *yet*, or *so*.

- By 1988, the average American car had achieved a high of 26 mpg, ^{but} by 2003 that figure had fallen to less than 21 mpg.

The coordinating conjunction tells the reader that the ideas in the two clauses are closely related and equally important.

Separate the independent clauses with a semicolon.

- The tattoo needle appeared to be like an extension of his arm, the needle was his brush, and the human body, his canvas.
- Nate was very lucky, he lived to see his hundredth birthday.

The semicolon tells the reader that the ideas in the two clauses are closely connected, but it implies the connection rather than stating it. Occasionally, a colon may be used to introduce a second independent clause (see P4-a).

Separate the independent clauses with a semicolon or a period, and add a conjunctive adverb or a transitional phrase such as *for example* or *in other words*.

- He doesn't need the map right now, ^{instead} he just follows the direction Kiem pointed out to him before and checks it with the compass.
- He doesn't need the map right now, ^{Instead} he just follows the direction Kiem pointed out to him before and checks it with the compass.

The semicolon tells the reader that the ideas in the two clauses are closely connected, and the conjunctive adverb describes the connection. The period shows a stronger break. Conjunctive adverbs are used more frequently in formal than in informal writing.

Note: A **subordinating conjunction** always begins a clause, but a conjunctive adverb can appear in other positions within a clause. If the conjunctive adverb appears in the middle of one clause rather than between two clauses, the semicolon is still placed between the clauses, not before the adverb.

- The importance of English as a link between those who have little else in common is clear, ^{in fact} the true controversy lies in other issues.

conjunctive adverb A word or phrase (such as *finally*, *however*, or *therefore*) that tells how the ideas in two sentences or independent clauses are connected.

subordinating conjunction A word or phrase (such as *although*, *because*, *since*, or *as soon as*) that introduces a dependent clause and relates it to an independent clause.

Turn the independent clauses into separate sentences.

- ▶ At high noon we were off, paddling down the Potomac River, ^{We} we were two to a canoe, leaving space in the middle for our gear.
- ▶ Unfortunately, not many people realize how much scientific research with animals means to the medical world, ^{Only} only the scientists themselves and the diseased patients who suffer and hope for new cures can fully understand the importance of animal testing.

The period at the end of the first independent clause tells the reader that one complete sentence is ending and another is beginning.

Turn one independent clause into a phrase that modifies the other.

- ▶ At high noon we were off, paddling down the Potomac River, ~~we were~~ two to a canoe with space in the middle for our gear.

Eliminating the subject and verb in the second clause turns this clause into a **modifying phrase**, reducing the number of words and closely connecting the ideas.

modifying phrase A word group that serves as an adjective or adverb.

S2 Fused Sentences

For practice, go to bedfordstmartins.com/theguide/fused

A fused or run-on sentence consists of two **independent clauses** run together with no punctuation.

	INDEPENDENT CLAUSE	INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
FUSED SENTENCE	Her mood was good I took the opportunity to ask if she had a few minutes to answer some questions.	

independent (main) clause A word group with a subject and a predicate that can stand alone as a separate sentence. (A predicate is the part of a clause that includes a complete verb and says something about the subject.)

Because a fused sentence can be edited in many ways, first consider how the ideas in the two independent clauses are related, and then select the most appropriate strategy below. In the example just given, the writer might emphasize the causal relationship between the clauses.

- ▶ ^{Because her} Her mood was good, I took the opportunity to ask if she had a few minutes to answer some questions.

subordinating conjunction A word or phrase (such as *although*, *because*, *since*, or *as soon as*) that introduces a dependent clause and relates it to an independent clause.

dependent (subordinate) clause A word group that has a subject, a predicate, and a subordinating word (such as *because*) at the beginning; it cannot stand by itself as a sentence but must be connected to an independent (main) clause.

coordinating conjunction A word that joins comparable and equally important sentence elements: *for*, *and*, *or*, *but*, *nor*, *yet*, or *so*.

conjunctive adverb A word or phrase (such as *finally*, *however*, or *therefore*) that tells how the ideas in two sentences or independent clauses are connected.

Make one of the clauses subordinate to the other by adding a subordinating conjunction and rewording as necessary.

- ▶ Kids can be so cruel to each other ^{that} it is a wonder we all make it through childhood.
- ▶ ^{Although kids can be extremely} ^{amazingly} ~~Kids can be so~~ cruel to each other, ^{it is a wonder} we all make it through childhood.

By beginning a clause with a subordinating conjunction, you indicate that the clause is subordinate to — and dependent on — the main clause. Usually, the **dependent clause** explains or qualifies the independent clause. Choose the subordinating conjunction carefully so that it tells the reader how the dependent clause relates to the independent clause.

Add a comma and a coordinating conjunction to separate the independent clauses.

- ▶ The beast was upon me ^{and} I could feel his paws pressing down on my chest.

The coordinating conjunction tells the reader that the ideas in the two clauses are equally important.

Separate the independent clauses with a semicolon.

- ▶ I looked around at the different monitors; most were large color monitors, many of which were connected to the central unit.

The semicolon tells the reader that the ideas in the two clauses are closely connected, but it implies the connection rather than stating it. Occasionally, a colon may be used to introduce a second independent clause (see P4-a).

Separate the independent clauses with a semicolon or a period, and add a conjunctive adverb or a transitional phrase such as *for example* or *in other words*.

- ▶ Most students do not do their homework during the day ^{instead} they do it in the evening.
- ▶ Most students do not do their homework during the day ^{Instead} they do it in the evening.

The semicolon indicates that the ideas in the two clauses are closely connected, and the conjunctive adverb explains the connection. The period indicates a stronger break. Conjunctive adverbs appear more frequently in formal than in informal writing.

Note: A **subordinating conjunction** always *introduces* a clause, but a conjunctive adverb can occupy different positions within a clause. If the conjunctive adverb appears in the middle of one clause rather than between two clauses, the semicolon is still placed between the clauses, not before the adverb.

- ▶ Most students do not do their homework during the day they do it in the evening.

Turn the independent clauses into separate sentences.

- ▶ He was only eight. His life hadn't even started.
- ▶ I couldn't believe it. I had fallen into a puddle of mud.

The period at the end of the first independent clause tells the reader that one complete sentence is ending and another is beginning.

Turn one independent clause into a phrase that modifies the other.

- ▶ The beast was upon me, I could feel his paws pressing down on my chest.

Eliminating the subject and verb in the second clause turns this clause into a **modifying phrase**, reducing the number of words and closely linking the ideas.

S3 Sentence Fragments

For practice, go to bedfordstmartins.com/theguide/frag

A fragment is either an incomplete sentence, lacking a complete **subject** or **predicate**, or a **dependent clause** punctuated as a sentence. Even though a fragment begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, it cannot stand alone as a sentence.

FRAGMENT Tonight it's my turn. *A ride-along with Sergeant Rob Nether of the Green Valley Police Department.*

Because a fragment can often be edited in several ways, begin by considering what the fragment lacks and how its ideas relate to those in the sentences before and after it. Then use one of the following strategies to change the fragment into a complete sentence. To edit the fragment in the example, the writer might connect it to the preceding sentence.

- ▶ Tonight it's my turn, ^{for a} A ride-along with Sergeant Rob Nether of the Green Valley Police Department.

modifying phrase A word group that serves as an adjective or adverb.

subject The part of a clause that identifies who or what is being discussed: At the checkpoint, we unloaded the canoes.

predicate The part of a clause that includes a complete verb and says something about the subject: At the checkpoint, we unloaded the canoes.

dependent (subordinate) clause A word group that has a subject, a predicate, and a subordinating word (such as *because*) at the beginning; it cannot stand by itself as a sentence but must be connected to an independent (main) clause: *Although it was raining*, we loaded our gear onto the buses.

Connect the fragment to a complete sentence.

- ▶ Frank turned the tarot cards one at a time/^{each} Each time telling me something about my future.
- ▶ A unique design has the distinct advantage of becoming associated with its role/^{for} For example, the highly successful Coke bottle shape, which is now associated with soft drinks.

Eliminate the subordinating word or words that make a clause dependent.

- ▶ The world that I was born into demanded continuous work. ^{Nobody} Where nobody got ahead, and everyone came home tired.

Add or complete the verb or the subject to change a fragment into a complete sentence.

- ▶ The crowd in the lounge is basically young. The teenage and early twenties generation/^{gathers there}
- ▶ Children are brought up in different ways. Some/^{grow up} around violence.

Note: Sometimes writers use fragments intentionally for emphasis or special effect.

The bare utility of the clock echoes the simplicity of the office. No sign of a large hardwood desk or a pillowy leather chair or even a wall with shelves filled with imposing law books.

Use intentional fragments cautiously. Especially in academic writing, many readers may perceive them as errors, regardless of your intentions. In the example above, for instance, the same impact might also be achieved by using a colon or dash.