

REVISING FOR CLARITY – SENTENCE FRAGMENTS, RUN-ON SENTENCES, AND PARALLELISM

Writing clearly is essential to effective communication. In English, common errors that compromise clear writing include sentence fragments, run-on sentences, non-parallel sentence construction, and poor word choices when making the transition between sentences and paragraphs.

Topic	Examples
<p>1. What is a sentence?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sentence is a group of words that must contain two parts: a subject and a verb • A sentence must express a comprehensible idea or thought. • A sentence is not a matter of length: two words can be a complete sentence; a dozen words might not be a complete sentence. 	<p>Maggie works.</p> <p>My mother knits in the evening.</p> <p>Dave cooks Alice leaves for England the day tomorrow and returns on the day of spring</p>
<p>2. What is a Fragment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fragment is a group of words in which either the subject or verb is missing. As a result, the group of words is incomprehensible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragment: Went to class. • Sentence: Lisa installs her exhibit. • Fragment: Lisa her exhibit. • Sentence: Before using the digital camera, take the cap off. • Fragment: Before using the digital camera.
<p>3. What are run-on sentences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes a writer expresses two complete thoughts as one sentence. • When the writer does not separate the two complete thoughts with punctuation, the result is a run-on sentence. • Run-on sentences are confusing because the reader does not know where one complete thought ends and the second complete thought begins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run- on: Asheka is painting a portrait of a young student is a challenging act. • Edited: Asheka is paintinh a portrait of a young student. Painting a portrait is a challenging job. • A run on sentence also occurs when a writer incorrectly uses a comma to join two complete thoughts. When two complete thoughts are joined with one comma and no connecting word (ie: 'and', 'but', 'or'), a comma splice occurs. • Run-on: Mrs. Vassel is an artist, she studied at OCAD. • Edited: Mrs. Vassel is an artist. She studied at OCAD.
<p>A run-on sentence can be corrected by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding a comma and then a connecting word (ie: <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, <i>or</i>, <i>nor</i>, <i>yet</i>) after the first group of a comprehensible thought or idea of a run-on sentence. <p>• By using a semicolon after the first comprehensible thought if the two</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run on: Diane does the cooking Karen washes the dishes. • Edited: Diane does the cooking, and Karen washes the dishes. • Run on: Michelle likes swimming she prefers tennis. • Edited: Michelle likes swimming, but she prefers tennis. • Run on: Dark colour can make a room appear

<p>comprehensible thoughts are closely related.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By using a semicolon together with a special kind of connecting word. 	<p>smaller light colour can make a room appear larger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edited: Dark colour can make a room appear smaller; light colour can make a room appear larger. • Run-on: Sun Tan lotion helps a person tan gradually sunscreen blocks the sun's rays and prevents sunburn. • Edited: Suntan lotion helps a person tan gradually; however, sunscreen blocks the sun's rays and prevents sunburn.
<p>Provided is a list of other connecting words that are often used with semicolons in front of them and a comma after them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words that add on a related sentence: <i>furthermore, also, moreover, besides, in addition, for instance, for example, in fact, like.</i> • Connecting words that add an opposing or opposite side: <i>however, on the contrary, nevertheless, on the other hand.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run-on: I don't like big cars, besides, they cost too much. • Edited: I don't like big cars; besides they cost too much. • Run-on: Lyn enjoys her new job however she wants to go back to school. • Edited: Lyn enjoys her new job; however, she wants to go back to school.
<p>5. What is Parallel Structure?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating <u>conjunctions</u> such as "and" or "or." • A parallel structure that begins with clauses must keep on with clauses. Changing to another pattern or changing the voice of the verb (from active to passive or vice versa) will break the parallelism. 	<p><u>Words and Phrases:</u> With the <u>-ing form (gerund)</u> of words: Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and bicycling. <u>Infinitive Phrases:</u> Parallel: Mary likes to hike, to swim, and to ride a bicycle. — or — Mary likes to hike, swim, and ride a bicycle. (Note: You can use "to" before all the verbs in a sentence or only before the first one.)</p> <p><u>Do not mix forms.</u> Not Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and to ride a bicycle. Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and riding a bicycle. Not Parallel: The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and in a detailed manner. Parallel: The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and thoroughly. Not Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and his motivation was low. Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists After a Colon: Be sure to keep all the elements in a list in the same form. 	<p>because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and lacked motivation.</p> <p>Not Parallel: The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and to do some warm-up exercises before the game.</p> <p>Parallel: The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and that they should do some warm-up exercises before the game. — or — The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, not eat too much, and do some warm-up exercises before the game.</p> <p>Not Parallel: The salesman expected that he would present his product at the meeting, that there would be time for him to show his slide presentation, and that questions would be asked by prospective buyers.</p> <p>(passive) Parallel: The salesman expected that he would present his product at the meeting, that there would be time for him to show his slide presentation, and that prospective buyers would ask him questions.</p> <p>Not Parallel: The dictionary can be used for these purposes: to find word meanings, pronunciations, correct spellings, and looking up irregular verbs.</p> <p>Parallel: The dictionary can be used for these purposes: to find word meanings, pronunciations, correct spellings, and irregular verbs.</p>
<p>Proofreading Strategies to Try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim your paper, pausing at the words "and" and "or." Check on each side of these words to see whether the items joined are parallel. If not, make them parallel. • If you have several items in a list, put them in a column to see if they are parallel. • Listen to the sound of the items in a list or the items being compared. Do you hear the same kinds of sounds? For example, is there a series of "-ing" words beginning each item? Or do you hear a rhythm being repeated? If something is breaking that rhythm or repetition of sound, check to see if it needs to be made parallel. 	