Run-on Sentences

Run-on sentences do just what the words say: they "run on" from one independent clause to another, without the necessary punctuation or coordinating conjunction that signals the reader how, or whether, they're related.

Anatomy of a Sentence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Clause</td>
<td>A clause that can stand alone syntactically as a complete sentence; contains at least a subject and a verb</td>
<td>She ate an apple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate Clause</td>
<td>A clause that cannot stand alone as a sentence, but functions as either a noun, adjective or adverb in a sentence</td>
<td>when she ate an apple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating Conjunction</td>
<td>A conjunction, such as &quot;and,&quot; &quot;but,&quot; or &quot;or,&quot; that joins two grammatical elements of the same sentence or construction</td>
<td>She ate an apple, but she did not like it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to identify a clause, look for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
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<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>The &quot;doer&quot; of the sentence:</td>
<td>He caught the ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>What is &quot;done&quot;:</td>
<td>He caught the ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>What the action is &quot;done to&quot;:</td>
<td>He caught the ball.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow these three steps to find and fix run-ons:

1. Does the sentence contain more than one independent clause? Independent clauses are like mini-sentences, because they can stand alone as grammatically complete expressions. Subordinate clauses cannot stand by themselves; they require an independent clause to form a sentence.
   a. Two independent clauses in run-on sentence:
      I cannot remain silent any longer, the roads have become clogged with bicyclists.
   b. Subordinate clause in correct sentence:
      Although more commuters are using bicycles, there are still too many cars downtown.

2. Look for sentence boundaries; can you identify where one clause ends and the next begins based on the subjects and verbs? Draw an imaginary line between the independent clauses:
   a. I cannot remain silent any longer, | the roads have become clogged with bicyclists.

3. Fix the run-on in one of these ways:
   a. Separate the independent clauses with a period or a semicolon.
      i. I cannot remain silent any longer; the roads have become clogged with bicyclists.
b. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction: *and, or, nor, because, but, for, so, yet*. This remedies a comma splice; Commas are two independent clauses that are incorrectly joined by a comma.
   i. I cannot remain silent any longer because the roads have become clogged with bicyclists.

**Practice Sentences**

First read each sentence and underline all the subjects and circle all the verbs. Then follow the steps in each example to determine whether the sentence is a run-on or not.

1. Humans have been fascinated by time travel at least since the days of H. G. Wells, Einstein's theories took the notion out of the realm of science fiction.
   
   **Step 1.** The sentence contains more than one independent clause.
   **Step 2.** The independent clauses are as follows: Humans have been fascinated by time travel at least since the days of H. G. Wells, | Einstein's theories took the notion out of the realm of science fiction.
   **Step 3.** Fix the run-on by changing the punctuation or the conjunction: *Humans have been fascinated by time travel at least since the days of H. G. Wells. Einstein's theories took the notion out of the realm of science fiction.*

2. One of Wells's most famous novels was *The Time Machine* it introduced Victorian society to the fascination of time travel.

   **Step 1.** The sentence contains more than one independent clause.
   **Step 2.** The independent clauses are as follows: One of Wells's most famous novels was *The Time Machine* | it introduced Victorian society to the fascination of time travel.
   **Step 3.** Fix the run-on by changing the punctuation or the conjunction: *One of Wells's most famous novels was The Time Machine; it introduced Victorian society to the fascination of time travel.*

3. Einstein declared time to be the fourth dimension, suddenly physicists began to think of traveling in time as they thought of traveling through space.

   **Step 1.** The sentence contains more than one independent clause.
   **Step 2.** The independent clauses are as follows: Einstein declared time to be the fourth dimension, | suddenly physicists began to think of traveling in time as they thought of traveling through space.
   **Step 3.** Fix the run-on by changing the punctuation or the conjunction: *Einstein declared time to be the fourth dimension, and suddenly physicists began to think of traveling in time as they thought of traveling through space.*