

Run-ons

These are also called fused sentences. You are making a run-on when you put two complete sentences (a subject and its predicate and another subject and its predicate) together in one sentence without separating them properly. Here's an example of a run-on:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is very garlicky.

This one sentence actually contains two complete sentences. But in the rush to get that idea out, I made it into one incorrect sentence. Luckily, there are many ways to correct this run-on sentence.

1. You could use a semicolon:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus; it is very garlicky.

2. You could use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so):

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, for it is very garlicky. -OR- My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, and it is very garlicky.

3. You could use a subordinating conjunction (see above):

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus because it is very garlicky. -OR- Because it is so garlicky, my favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus.

4. You could make it into two separate sentences with a period in between:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus. It is very garlicky.

5. You could use an em-dash (a long dash) for emphasis:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus—it is very garlicky.

REMEMBER, you **CANNOT** simply add a comma between the two sentences, or you'll end up with what's called a "comma splice." Here's an example of a comma splice:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, it is very garlicky.

You can fix a comma splice the same way you fix a run-on—either change the punctuation or add a conjunction.

Finding Run-ons

As you can see, fixing run-ons is pretty easy once you see them—but how do you find out if a sentence is a run-on if you aren't sure? Try these two tests:

- Turn your sentences into yes/no questions.
- Turn your sentences into tag questions

These are two things that nearly everyone can do easily if the sentence is not a run-on, but they become next to impossible if it is. Look at the following sentence:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus.

If you turn it into a question that someone could answer with a yes or no, it looks like this:

Is my favorite Mediterranean spread hummus?

If you turn it into a tag question, it looks like this:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, isn't it?

The first sentence is complete and not a run-on, because our test worked.