

THE RUN ON SENTENCE

"To write simply is as difficult as to be good." W. Somerset Maugham

The grammar outlaw: The Run-on Sentence

The grammar crime: Run-on sentences join two or more complete sentences with no punctuation.

Question: How do we know we have a run-on sentence?

Outlaw
Michaela loves to draw horses she is a talented artist.

This sentence is incorrect because **"Michaela loves to draw horses"** and **"she is a talented artist"** can both stand as complete sentences. Therefore, we cannot merge them into one sentence without separating them somehow.

Question: How do we catch run-on sentence outlaws?

Run-on sentence grammar outlaws behave similarly to comma splices; however, because no comma is involved they are harder to spot.

When you read sentences, try to be aware of the independent clauses. When you see two in the same sentence with no punctuation you have caught a run-on sentence outlaw.

Clues: Look for two subjects within the same sentence, or a subject and a pronoun.

Question: How do we rehabilitate run-on sentence outlaws?

We use the same method as we rehabilitate comma splices. There are five main methods of fixing run-on sentences.

1. We can separate the two clauses into two sentences.

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
Miranda was the lead vocalist in her band it was a punk rock band.	Miranda was the lead vocalist in her band. It was a punk rock band.

2. We can replace the comma with a semi-colon.

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
Gordon laughed at Sandy's joke it was lewd.	Gordon laughed at Sandy's joke; it was lewd.

3. We can replace the comma with a co-ordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, yet, nor, or so).

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
The night was cold we forgot to bring our coats.	The night was cold, and we forgot to bring out coats.

4. We can replace the comma with a subordinating conjunction (e.g., after, although, before, unless, as, because, even though, if, since, until, when, while).

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
Maria and John like skiing Karen does not.	Although Maria and John like skiing, Karen does not.

5. We can replace the comma with a semi-colon and transitional word (e.g., however, moreover, on the other hand, nevertheless, instead, also, therefore, consequently, otherwise, as a result).

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
I expected to pay ten dollars for the bus ride to Halifax I was wrong.	I expected to pay ten dollars for the bus ride to Halifax; however , I was wrong.