

# Sentence Fragments and Run-on Sentences

What are they? How can I fix them?

## With Notes on the Common Comma Splice

### What is a sentence fragment?

A better question is, “What is a sentence?” A sentence is comprised of a subject (the actor) and a predicate (the action). This means that the basic sentence requires a noun and a verb. These characteristics ensure that a sentence expresses a complete thought.

**Example of a sentence:** *The cat in the hat was frightened.* In this sentence, *cat* is the subject and *was frightened* is the predicate. The words express a complete thought!

A **fragment** is a group of words that does not meet the criteria for a sentence and therefore does not express a complete thought.

**Example of a fragment:** *The cat in the hat.* In this sentence, *cat* is the subject, but not predicate exists (we do not know what the cat is doing). *In the hat* is just a prepositional phrase modifying *cat*. A complete thought is not being expressed, so this group of words is a fragment.

**Hint:** Avoid fragments in papers!

### What is a run-on sentence?

Contrary to what some may believe, run-on sentences are not merely very long sentences. Run-on’s are the opposite of fragments; they contain too many subjects and predicates! They may also be referred to as “fused sentences” because of this.

**Example:** *The cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy it was funny.* This sentence is relatively short, but it is a run-on because it is two sentences (*The cat in the bat went crazy* and *It was funny*) randomly made into one sentence.

**How to correct run-on’s:** Take, for example, our run-on, *The cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy it was funny.*

- One option is to make individual sentences:  
*The cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy. It was funny.*
- Another option is to proper combine the sentences as two independent clauses. You can do this with a conjunction or strong punctuation:  
*The cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy; it was funny.*  
*The cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy and it was funny.*  
*The cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy—it was funny.*  
*Just because the cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy, does not mean that it was funny.*
- Finally, consider rearranging the sentence entirely:  
*We thought it was funny when the cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy.*

### What is a comma splice?

Let’s face it: “splice” is an awesome word. What’s not so awesome, however, are a thousand red marks on your paper for the crime of liberally sprinkling comma splices throughout it. So what is a comma splice? How can you avoid using one? It’s simple: a comma splice is the use of a comma to join (“splice” together) two independent clauses. Suspiciously, comma-spliced sentences read like run-on’s; they will be if the only thing you do is remove the comma splice.

**Comma Splice Example:** *The cat in the hat next to the bat went crazy, it was funny.*

**Hint:** Review the examples above for correcting run-on sentences if you need ideas for comma splice alternatives.