



# Comma Splices

*...and run ons*

By Anthony Starros, M.F.A.

This lecture will be in two parts:

1. **Defining The Problem**
2. **Fixing The Problem**



## 1. Define It:

Comma splices and run-ons (C.S. or R.O.) revolve around the same basic idea: *two complete thoughts (sentences) are simply joined together incorrectly.*

That's it.

Run-on sentences don't have anything to do with how *long* sentences are.

Comma Splices are just two complete thoughts (*independent clauses*) joined only with a comma, which is grammatically incorrect.

for example:

**I listen to old school hip-hop.**

*and*

**It is better than contemporary hip-hop.**

These are *complete sentences* and can stand alone.

Each one expresses a *complete thought*, so each should end with a period.

However, since they are short sentences *and* closely related to each other, joining them together would create better **Coherence** in your writing.

The problem comes about when they are joined *incorrectly*.



for example:

I like listening to old school hip-hop, it's better than contemporary hip-hop.  
(*comma splice*)

or

I like listening to old school hip-hop it's better than contemporary hip-hop.  
(*run-on*)

Note: the comma splice is punctuated incorrectly because *two complete thoughts cannot be joined by a comma only.*

The run-on is punctuated incorrectly because the two complete sentences are “fused” together: one thought “runs-on” into the other. It has nothing to do with how long or short the sentence is.

When you have two independent clauses (*complete thoughts*) joined together without proper punctuation, you have either a *comma splice* (if there is a comma between the two), or you have a *run-on sentence* (a.k.a. fused sentence) if no punctuation joins them.



## 2. Fix It:

Fixing comma splices and run-ons is actually quite easy. There are four ways to fix these common problems:

1. add a period and separate into two sentences
2. add a semicolon (;) to combine into one sentence
3. add a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) and join them together
4. use a subordinating word and join them together

1. Fix by separating the two sentences with a period (don't forget to capitalize the first letter of the second sentence):

I like listening to old school hip-hop. It's better than contemporary hip-hop.



2. If the relationship between the ideas is close, add a semicolon (;) between them and join them into one sentence. In this case, there is no need to capitalize the first letter of the next sentence:

I like listening to old school hip-hop; it's better than contemporary hip-hop.

3. When using coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS) always choose the conjunction (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So) carefully to show the proper relationship between your sentences. Don't just arbitrarily stick in any word. "But" does not mean the same thing as "for."

I like listening to old school hip-hop, for it's better than contemporary hip-hop.



4. Finally, subordinating conjunctions can also be used to eliminate run-ons: add a subordinating word and attach it to the complete thought (subordination):

I like old school hip-hop because it's better than contemporary hip-hop.

*Remember that the part of the sentence that is a complete thought carries more emphasis. In this case, the most important part of the above sentence is "I like old-school hip-hop." Notice the difference when switched:*

*I like contemporary hip-hop because it's better than old school hip-hop.*

*The focus of this sentence is now "I like contemporary hip-hop" and implies that as the focus of discussion.*

*fin*