Sentence boundaries: joining & separating clauses

An independent clause has a subject and a verb and can stand alone



Lesson `rw.conventions.W1`

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The idea

An independent clause has a subject and a verb and can stand alone. Two independent clauses may NOT be joined by a comma alone (a comma splice) or by nothing at all (a fused or run-on sentence).

Are the two parts each independent clauses, or is one dependent or a phrase? What sits at the boundary between them?

If both are independent, join with a period, a semicolon, or comma + coordinating conjunction. A conjunctive adverb needs a semicolon. If one part is dependent or a phrase, attach it; do not punctuate it as a full sentence.

Watch every step

Although the road was icy, ___

Which choice completes the text so that it forms a complete sentence?

- **A.** the bus arrived on time.
- **B.** arriving on time. ✗ *fragment*
- **C.** which arrived on time. ✗ *fragment*
- **D.** on time despite the conditions. ✗ *fragment*

Why A — "the bus arrived on time.." Choose the boundary punctuation that matches the clause types.

Now a harder one

The recipe calls for fresh basil ___ dried basil will not produce the same flavor.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- **A.** basil; dried
- **B.** basil, dried ✗ *comma splice*
- **C.** basil dried ✗ *fused/run-on*
- **D.** basil, therefore dried ✗ *connector error*

Why **A** — "basil; dried." Choose the boundary punctuation that matches the clause types.

The method, in one line

Sentence boundaries: joining & separating clauses

If both are independent, join with a period, a semicolon, or comma + coordinating conjunction. A conjunctive adverb needs a semicolon. If one part is dependent or a phrase, attach it; do not punctuate it as a full sentence.

Did I avoid a comma splice and a fused run-on? Did I treat conjunctive adverbs correctly? Is every sentence built on at least one independent clause?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ comma splice
Joins two independent clauses with only a comma.

⚠ fused/run-on
Joins two independent clauses with no punctuation at all.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

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