Fixing Run-On Sentences and Comma Splices by using Periods, Semicolons, or Commas and Coordinating Conjunctions

- If you do not divide independent clauses correctly, you will have one of two major problems in your writing: a fused sentence (also called a run-on sentence) or a comma splice.

- An independent clause can be thought of as a complete sentence. If a sentence has two parts which can be thought of as separate complete sentences (two independent clauses), those parts or clauses need to be divided. We do this by using a semicolon, which looks like this: ;
  Or we can use a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, for, but, yet, or so) with a comma. Using just a comma is not enough to fix these problems.

**Fused sentence:** The dog was swimming in the pond he lost his ball.

**Comma splice:** The dog was swimming in the pond, he lost his ball.

Once you see a fused sentence or a comma splice, you can learn to fix them. Some of the best ways to fix them are:

1. **Make each part (clause) into a complete sentence:**
   The dog was swimming in the pond. He lost his ball.

2. **Use a semicolon between each clause:**
   The dog was swimming in the pond; he lost his ball.

3. **Use a conjunctive adverb between the clauses. The adverb needs to have a semicolon before it and a comma after it:**
   The dog was swimming in the pond; therefore, he lost his ball.

4. **Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction between the clauses:**
   The dog was swimming in the pond, and he lost his ball.

5. **Change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause by beginning it with a relative pronoun (who, whom, whose, which, whoever, that, whomever, whichever, whatever) or by using a subordinating conjunction such as after, because, while, or since:**
While the dog was swimming in the pond, he lost his ball.

6. **Reword the whole sentence in a clearer way:**
   The dog lost his ball in the pond.

All of these changes are correct and picking which one to use is a matter of style. **Read your sentence out loud to help decide which method is the best one to use.**

**Incorrect:** My roommate plays his music too loud, I am moving out next month. (Comma Splice)

**Correct:** My roommate plays his music too loud; I am moving out next month. (Semicolon)

**Incorrect:** The king could tell his people were unhappy he passed a law to lower taxes. (run-on)

**Correct:** The king could tell his people were unhappy, so he passed a law to lower taxes. (comma plus coordinating conjunction)

**Incorrect:** He used to race toy cars, now he races real cars. (comma splice)

**Correct:** He used to race toy cars; now he races real cars. (semicolon)

**Incorrect:** Mr. Williams is a poet, he hasn’t written a poem in a year. (comma splice)

**Correct:** Mr. Williams is a poet, but he hasn’t written a poem in a year. (comma plus coordinating conjunction)

**Incorrect:** Many people believe they cannot learn to write correctly they do not know it takes time to learn. (fused sentence)

**Correct:** Since many people do not know it takes time to learn, they believe they cannot write correctly. (Re-worded sentence)