

# Run-on Sentences

## Introduction

Run-on sentences occur when two or more sentences are joined together and given punctuation appropriate for just one sentence. Normally, if a segment of writing can stand alone as one sentence, then it should be punctuated as a sentence. Occasionally, two such segments can be joined to make one sentence by using a semicolon. If you are not sure how to determine whether something is a sentence, review the lesson on sentence fragments and then come back to this lesson which focuses on correcting run-on sentences.

## Identifying Sentence Breaks

To correct a run-on sentence you first have to determine the location of each true sentence break. See if you can identify the correct sentence breaks in the following sentences:

### Example

**Programs can be very complex, make sure you comment your code.**

(Programs can be very complex, | make sure you comment your code.)

Notice, for example, that both parts can be made into tag questions:

Programs can be very complex, can't they?  
Make sure you comment your code, won't you?)

**The system works well it is very efficient it meets all the client's requirements.**

(The system works well | it is very efficient | it meets all the client's requirements.)

Notice, for example, that all parts can be made into yes/no questions:

Does the system work well?  
Is it very efficient?  
Does it meet all of the client's requirements?)

**The directors gave the figures to the accountant later they were given to the staff.**

(The directors gave the figures to the accountant | later they were given to the staff.)

Notice, for example, that both parts can be made into tag questions:

The directors gave the figures to the accountant, didn't they?  
Later, they were given to the staff, weren't they?)

**It was not our decision, nevertheless, we agree with it wholeheartedly.**

(It was not our decision, | nevertheless, we agree with it wholeheartedly.)

Again, both parts pass tests as sentences:

It was not our decision, was it?  
Nevertheless, we agree with it wholeheartedly, don't we?)

**The information session was very popular this is a good sign.**

(The information session was very popular | this is a good sign.)

Both parts pass tests as sentences:

Was the information session very popular?  
This is a good sign, isn't it?)

**The meeting was cancelled, a severe thunderstorm was predicted.**

(The meeting was cancelled, | a severe thunderstorm was predicted.)

Both parts pass tests as sentences:

The meeting was cancelled, wasn't it?  
Was a severe thunderstorm predicted?)

**The staff were protesting they were chanting their demands.**

The staff were protesting | they were chanting their demands.)

Both parts pass tests as sentences.

Were the staff protesting?  
Were they chanting their demands?)

# Correcting Run-on Sentences

Once you have found a run-on sentence, there are a number of ways in which you can try to correct the problem.

1. You could divide the run-on into multiple sentences.
2. You could join the different parts with a conjunction such **and** or **so**.
3. You could make one part dependent on the other part by using a word such as **which** or **because**.
4. You could make one sentence a simple phrase.
5. If the two segments that could stand alone as sentences are closely related, you can use a semicolon.
6. You could use a combination of methods.

## Example

Programs can be very complex, make sure you comment your code. **X**  
(Programs can be very complex. Make sure you comment your code. **✓**)

It was not our decision, nevertheless, we agree with it wholeheartedly. **X**  
(It was not our decision. Nevertheless, we agree with it wholeheartedly. **✓**)

The director gave the figures to the accountant later they were given to the staff. **X**  
(The director gave the figures to the accountant and later they were given to the staff. **✓**)

The meeting was cancelled, a severe thunderstorm was predicted. **X**  
(A severe thunderstorm was predicted, so the meeting was cancelled. **✓**)

The information session was very popular this is a good sign. **X**  
(The information session was very popular, which is a good sign. **✓**)

The meeting was cancelled, a severe thunderstorm was predicted. **X**  
(The meeting was cancelled because a severe thunderstorm was predicted. **✓**)

The staff were protesting they were chanting their demands. **X**  
(The protesting staff were chanting their demands. **✓**)

The system works well it is very efficient it meet all the client's requirements. **X**  
(The system works well; it is very efficient and meets all the client's requirements. **✓**)

## Run-on Sentences Quiz

*For each set of statements, click on ALL those that are good sentences and not run-on sentences.*

- A good leader is essential to the project, choose one carefully.
- A good leader is essential to the project, so choose one carefully.
- A good leader is essential to the project, who are you choosing?
- A good leader is essential to the project, so you should choose carefully.
  
- The meeting was short, this was good.
- The meeting was short, I expected this.
- The meeting was short, just as I expected.
- The meeting was short, which was good.
  
- Two files were lost, however, we have backups.
- Two files were lost, luckily, I have backups.
- Two files were lost but we were not too concerned because we have backups.
- Two files were lost, but we have backups.
  
- The architect collected the designs later she met with the clients.
- The architect collected the designs and then met with the clients.
- The building site is wonderful; it has a lake it overlooks a river.
- The building site is wonderful; it has a lake and overlooks a river.
  
- Only one unit was sold, which was disappointing.
- Only one unit was sold, this was disappointing.
- Only one unit was sold, we were disappointed.
- Disappointingly, only one unit was sold.

## Answers

- A good leader is essential to the project, choose one carefully.
- A good leader is essential to the project, so choose one carefully. **✓**
- A good leader is essential to the project, who are you choosing?
- A good leader is essential to the project, so you should choose carefully. **✓**

- The meeting was short, this was good.
- The meeting was short, I expected this.
- The meeting was short, just as I expected. ✓
- The meeting was short, which was good. ✓

- Two files were lost, however, we have backups.
- Two files were lost, luckily, I have backups.
- Two files were lost but we were not too concerned because we have backups. ✓
- Two files were lost, but we have backups. ✓

- The architect collected the designs later she met with the clients.
- The architect collected the designs and then met with the clients. ✓
- The building site is wonderful; it has a lake it overlooks a river.
- The building site is wonderful; it has a lake and overlooks a river. ✓

- Only one unit was sold, which was disappointing. ✓
- Only one unit was sold, this was disappointing.
- Only one unit was sold, we were disappointed.
- Disappointingly, only one unit was sold. ✓