



AVOIDING RUN-ON SENTENCES



A sentence is a complete thought: this is a rule we all learned early in our education. However, it's a rule that gets us into trouble with run-on sentences when we misuse it. While writing a sentence, we're more focused on the idea in our head than on sentence structure. For example, when we write -- "The Beatles came to the U.S. in February 1964" -- and we pause for a moment to think before adding -- "this was the modern day version of a British invasion, but this time it was one of musicians not soldiers" -- we often end up with a run-on sentence that looks like this:

The Beatles came to the U.S. in February 1964, this was the modern day version of a British invasion, but this time it was one of musicians not soldiers.

It seems like it follows the sentence rule we learned long ago because the sentence is all about the same subject. But according to rules of correct sentence structure, we've just created a run-on.

How can I recognize run-on sentences?

- ❖ **A run on sentence can be made up of two or more complete sentences which are not separated by appropriate punctuation.**
 - **Sometimes two complete thoughts are not separated by any punctuation at all.**
The yellow dress made her skin look pale she wore it anyway.
 - **Sometimes a new thought is only separated by a comma and begins with a pronoun.**
Charles Dickens created the character of Oliver Twist, he also created Ebenezer Scrooge.
 - **Sometimes a new thought is not separated by any punctuation and begins with "however."**
Melanie forgot to do her assignment however the teacher gave her an extension.
- ❖ **Sometimes multiple thoughts are connected by conjunctions without proper punctuation.**
 - Bill is always out for himself and looking to improve his situation but he never cares about stepping on others as he climbs to the top.
- ❖ **Sometimes an idea is difficult to express and the thoughts come out in a confusing order.**
 - The employers rewarded their employees unlike today in many cases where the employer just doesn't care who he has working just as long as the company is making money.

How can I correct run-ons into proper sentences?

There are a number of ways to accomplish this.

- ❖ **Separate the ideas into two sentences using a period.**
 - The yellow dress made her skin look pale. She wore it anyway.
- ❖ **Create a compound sentence by adding a conjunction (and, but, or, so, nor, for, yet) and a comma).**
 - The yellow dress made her skin look pale, but she wore it anyway.

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- ❖ **Separate the two ideas with a semi-colon.**
 - Charles Dickens created the character of Oliver Twist; he also created Ebenezer Scrooge.

- ❖ **Create a complex sentence by adding a subordinating conjunction to one of the ideas (because, although, if, when, after, while, until, before, since, unless, etc.) + a comma.**
 - Because Bill is always out for himself and looking to improve his situation, he never cares about stepping on others as he climbs to the top.

- ❖ **Rethink the idea in the confusing sentence and write it clearly. Keep the idea but express it in a new sentence.**
 - In the past, employers rewarded their employees. In many cases today, however, employers don't care who is working for them, just as long as the company is making money.

Practicing What You've Learned:

How many ways can you correct the following run-on sentence?

The Beatles came to the U.S. in February 1964, this was the modern day version of a British invasion, but this time it was one of musicians not soldiers.