

COMMA SPLICES

A **comma splice** is the result of joining two independent clauses (groups of words that could stand alone as a sentence) with a comma. The problem is that the comma is not strong enough to hold two sentences together. Usually we write comma splices because we have two ideas that are so closely related that we want them together in the same sentence; therefore, instead of just a comma, we should find more appropriate ways of joining those ideas. One way is to add a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, so, for, yet*) after the comma or to remove the comma and add an appropriate subordinating conjunction between the two ideas. Another way is to change the comma to a stronger mark of punctuation such as the semicolon (;) or, if the second independent clause explains the first, a colon (:). Of course, separating the two ideas into two sentences with a period is also correct even though this method is not always the most effective.

Ex: I passed my physics test today, I studied four hours last night.

This is a **comma splice**. The writer tried to join two sentences *I passed my physics test today* and *I studied four hours last night* with a comma.

The following sentences show ways that the comma splice can be corrected:

I passed my physics test today, **for** I studied four hours last night. (Add a coordinating conjunction)

I passed my physics test today **because** I studied four hours last night. (Add a subordinating conjunction)

I passed my physics test today; I studied four hours last night. (Change the comma to a semicolon)

I passed my physics test today: I studied four hours last night. (Change the comma to a colon since the second clause explains why the first clause is true)

Exercise: Read the following sentences and determine if there any are comma splices. If a comma splice is present, try to rewrite the sentence correctly in at least two ways.

1. The dog should be put in the house, it is standing out in the rain.
2. When the stores open, Mary is the first to reach the sale racks.
3. I bought a new car, it is a Jeep Cherokee.
4. My mother drinks only brewed tea, coffee suits my tastes.

5. Jenny always stays up to watch Letterman, he is such a funny entertainer.
6. Something is wrong with Elrod, he is rubbing his ankle and frowning.
7. I usually don't watch television, when the bomb exploded in Oklahoma City, I watched CNN all evening.
8. I like to eat ice cream, I go to Dairy Queen every week.