

Run-On Sentences

One of the most common grammatical issues students face is the run-on sentence. Writing is all about communicating ideas as effectively as possible, and run-on sentences are the enemy of concise, clear communication. Luckily, they are also some of the easiest sentences to remedy, and provide the most options for revision.

How does one recognize a run-on sentence? One of the easiest ways is to determine if the writer is trying to say too much at once.

The service at the new Indian restaurant is horrible the food more than makes up for any issues with wait staff.

At work in the above sentence are two *independent clauses*, or pieces of information that can stand on their own as sentences. They possess subjects, a verb, and modifiers: these are the components of a full-fledged sentence, and shouldn't be crammed together. The next step is to revise this run-on sentence.

The service at the new Indian restaurant is horrible, the food more than makes up for any issues with the wait staff.

Here, the independent clauses have been accurately identified, but the next type of run-on sentence has now appeared: this is known as a *comma splice*, which occurs when independent clauses have been split, but only by a comma.

So, if a comma isn't the answer, than what is? Four choices are available to fix any run-on sentence. The easiest may be the utilization of a *coordinating conjunction*, or a linking word. These seven words are some of the most familiar in the English language: *and, or, for, nor, so, but, and yet*. The insertion of one of these small but powerful words is an effective solution.

The service at the new Indian restaurant is horrible, but the food more than makes up for any issues with the wait staff.

This is a successful revision. Still, we have more options. A semicolon could be employed, either with or without a *transitional expression*.

The service at the new Indian restaurant is horrible; the food more than makes up for any issues with the wait staff.

While correct grammatically, this revision feels weak. Using one of those transitional expressions could help in this instance.

The service at the new Indian restaurant is horrible; however, the food more than makes up for any issues with the wait staff.

Much stronger. Yet another solution is simply making each independent clause its own sentence.

The service at the new Indian restaurant is horrible. The food more than makes up for any issues with the wait staff.

If this division strengthens each sentence, don't hesitate to make them stand on their own. In this case, the two sentences feel like they belong together for maximum impact: after all, one relies on the other to make the point that the excellent food eclipses the poor service. A final tactic at one's disposal is the *subordination* of one clause to another. This means that one clause is made to take the lead, and the other, the *subordinate clause*, relies on the other for its impact.

Although the service at the new Indian restaurant is horrible, the food more than makes up for any issues with the wait staff.

Two items are used to make this work. The first is the *preposition*, the word at the beginning that sets up the relationship (in this instance, *although*). The second is the comma, which no longer splices the sentence but sets up the relationship. Though it may be the most complicated solution, it is very often the most effective.

Try each of these solutions when you collide with a run-on sentence: determine for yourself which one is the best for your purposes, relates the information the way you want, and strikes the tone you are striving to establish in your writing. A successful identification and revision of run-ons can turn confusion and clutter into power and precision.