



CHAPTER 16

the art of language | making the sentence work right

For this last “**ART OF LANGUAGE**” chapter, we first need to do some review.

You already know about **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES** from Chapter 7, page 93. It’s important that we review that now.

- An **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** is any group of words that has a **SUBJECT** and a **PREDICATE** and can stand alone as a sentence.
- The basic building block of a sentence, an **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE**, expresses **ONE THOUGHT** and does so with at least a **SUBJECT + A PREDICATE**.

The dog barks
 The dog runs
 The dog stays
 The dog laughs

These are all **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES**. They each have a **subject** (dog) and **predicate** (barks, runs, stays, laughs) and each one expresses a complete thought!

The dog is
 The dog that barks
 The dog in the house

These are **not INDEPENDENT CLAUSES**. They do not all have a subject and a predicate, and none of them expresses a complete thought. None of them could stand alone as a sentence.

The group of words below makes up one **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE**:

I come from Chicago = **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE**



This following paragraph is grammatically correct:

I come from Chicago. I love my hometown. Chicago is a great city. Chicago has great sports teams. Chicago has great restaurants. Chicago has fun clubs. Chicago has important art museums. There are parks in Chicago. You can walk along lake Michigan.

But, it doesn't *sound good*. We want our writing to sound good to the ear of our reader. But this paragraph gets clunky, awkward, and boring. We need to vary the **rhythm** of the language by joining independent clauses together.

joining independent clauses

To join two or more **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES** together, we need help from:

- **the punctuation marks: commas, periods, and semi-colons,**
-- and from --
- **coordinating conjunctions.**

COORDINATING CONJUNCTION

In Chapter 4, page 46, we saw that a **conjunction** joins words together. But there are different kinds of **conjunctions**.

A **COORDINATING CONJUNCTION** joins two **independent clauses** together. It coordinates the two **independent clauses**.

The two most common **coordinating conjunctions** are: and; but.

See Index III on page 243 for a list of all the conjunctions in English.

two common errors: run-on sentences

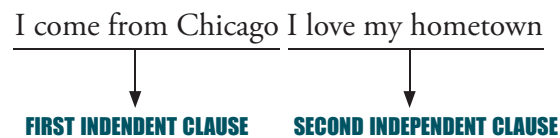
If you join two **independent clauses** together incorrectly, you have made an error that we call a **RUN-ON SENTENCE**. You could say that when you write a **RUN-ON SENTENCE**, you write a sentence that just *runs on* without the right punctuation. That can cause confusion. We have two types of **RUN-ON SENTENCES**:

- fused sentences, and
- comma splices.

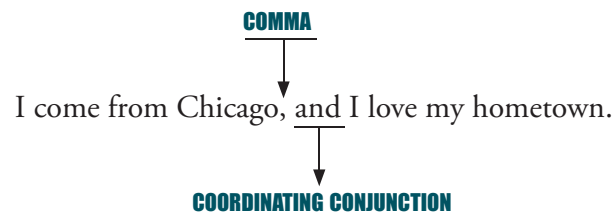
If you can learn how to avoid these two common errors that arise from incorrectly joining **independent clauses**, you'll save yourself a lot of trouble.

fused sentences

If you put two or more **independent clauses** together *without* the *comma* and *without* the *coordinating conjunction*, you have a **FUSED SENTENCE**. If you write:



you have *fused* the two **independent clauses** together, but you have not used the grammatical tools you need to join two **independent clauses**. If you add a *comma* and a *coordinating conjunction*:



you have a complete sentence.

We can't write:

The dog barks the dog runs home the dog stays home the dog lies on the rug the dog laughs.

It doesn't work. We have joined together **five different INDEPENDENT CLAUSES**, but it doesn't make sense. Let's look at three ways to fix this **FUSED SENTENCE**.

1. We can add **commas** and **coordinating conjunctions** to join the **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES** together. (see Chapter 4, page 46):

The dog barks, and the dog runs home, and the dog stays home, and the dog lies on the rug, and the dog laughs.

We have used the word “**and**” for all the **coordinating conjunctions** above.

3. You can fix the **fused sentence** with a **semi-colon** that keeps the sentence together, but does not fuse the **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES** (see Chapter 4, page 46):

*The dog barks; the dog runs home; the dog stays home;
the dog lies on the rug; the dog laughs.*

2. You can fix the **fused sentence** with **periods** to separate the **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES** into five different sentences. (see Chapter 4, page 46):

*The dog barks. The dog runs home. The dog stays home.
The dog lies on the rug. The dog laughs.*

comma splice

If you join two **independent clauses** together with **just** a **comma** (and *no coordinating conjunction*), you have a **COMMA SPLICE**. You have *spliced together* two or more **independent clauses** with *just* a **comma**. You have forgotten the **coordinating conjunction**.

*The dog barks, the dog runs home, the dog stays home,
the dog lies on the rug, the dog laughs.*

All you need to fix the **comma splice** is a **coordinating conjunction**:

*The dog barks, **and** the dog runs home, **and** the dog stays home,
and the dog lies on the rug, **and** the dog laughs.*

- or -

You can fix a **comma splice** with a **semi-colon**:

*The dog barks; the dog runs home; the dog stays home;
the dog lies on the rug; the dog laughs.*

- or -

You can fix a **comma splice** with a **period**:

*The dog barks. The dog runs home. The dog stays home.
The dog lies on the rug. The dog laughs.*

That's it. Fix a **comma splice** with a **coordinating conjunction**, or with a **semi-colon**, or with a **period**.

Chapter Review: Making the Sentence Work Right

The important factors in making your sentences work right include the following:

- all the parts of speech
- noun/verb agreement
- verb tense
- active verbs vs. passive verbs
- punctuation
- coordinating conjunctions



Independent Clause: Any group of words that has a **SUBJECT** and a **PREDICATE** and can stand alone is an **independent clause**.

To join two or more **independent clauses** together:

- we use **coordinating conjunctions** and
- **commas, periods, and semi-colons**.

The two most common coordinating conjunctions are:

- and
- but

Two common run-on sentence types of errors when joining two or more independent clauses:

- You have a **fused sentence** when you join two **independent clauses** without a comma and without a coordinating conjunction.
- You have a **comma splice** when you have joined two **independent clauses** with just a comma but without the coordinating conjunction.