Run-on Sentences

Students often think that a long sentence is the same as a run-on sentence. However, a run-on sentence consists of two complete sentences fused together without the correct punctuation. They can be short or long, but they are always confusing to the reader.

- This is not a long sentence, but it is confusing!
  Example:
  It is raining today I need an umbrella.

A run-on sentence can be corrected the same way as we fix a comma splice by adding: a period, a semi-colon, or a coordinating conjunction with a comma.

Examples:

- If you wanted to completely separate the two ideas, we would do this:
  It is raining today. I need an umbrella.

- If you wanted to show a connection between the two ideas, we could add a semi-colon:
  It is raining today; I need an umbrella.

- If you wanted to make an explicit connection between the two ideas we might add a conjunction:
  It is raining today; therefore, I need an umbrella.

When is a sentence too long?

- A sentence that contains many commas, semicolons, and clauses and tries to cover several ideas is generally considered to be too long.
• The real determining factor relates to whether or not the reader can follow and comprehend the ideas conveyed in the sentence.

• In general, a sentence longer than 25-30 words runs the risk of losing the reader’s attention.

• Remember that each main idea deserves its own sentence. If there are too many ideas in one sentence, or, if you can’t remember what the sentence is about, it is too long.

• It is important to have variety in sentence lengths in order to keep your reader engaged.

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