Run-on Sentences

They will kill you.
You think I’m joking.

- Run-on sentences are sentences that should be divided. They are not. Instead, they “run” into each other.
- Run-on sentences are the leading grammatical killer of hopes, dreams, and promotions.
First, we should understand what a “sentence” is.

✓ A sentence is one of two things:
  ✓ A phrase used to convey meaning in which a subject (noun) and an action (verb) appear. Ex: I ran.

✓ A term spent in jail, as in: “I was sentenced to grammar jail for having too many comma splices in my report.”
There are three kinds of written sentences:

✓ Simple (subject, verb, maybe a preposition)
✓ Complex (subject, verb, other stuff)
✓ Compound (two independent clauses, connected by a conjunction)
Sentences contain clauses.

✓ An individual, complete thought is called an *Independent Clause*. This is because it could stand on its own, if it needed to.

✓ Ex: I would like a potato masher for my birthday.

✓ Ex: I would like a puppy for my birthday.
Not all clauses are alike.

• Some sentences contain *dependent clauses*. These are parts that add meaning to the sentence, but can’t stand on their own.
  
  • Ex: I want a potato masher for my birthday, *which is on Thursday*. 
So: What’s a run-on sentence?

- A run-on sentence happens when two independent clauses get mashed together into one long, confusing phrase.
  - Ex: I would like a puppy for my birthday also I hope for a potato masher. When this happens, it’s called a fused sentence.
So: What’s a run-on sentence?

- The other type of run-on sentence happens when a comma is deployed incorrectly.
  - Ex: I would like a puppy for my birthday, I hope for a potato masher.
  - Ex: I think this thing is cool, ice cream is cooler.

When a comma gets stuck in a place that a period belongs, this is called a *comma splice*. 
How do I fix this?
I do not want to go to grammar jail.

There are four ways to fix run-on sentences:

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.*
2. Use a semicolon*.
3. Use a period and create two new sentences.
4. Restructure the sentence completely.

*Please note: Use semicolons and coordinating conjunctions only in consultation with an expert, such as your grammar book or instructor. Safety precautions save lives -- or at least grades.
Coordinating Conjunctions

We wanted ice cream, and we wanted it now.
We wanted ice cream, but we wanted it now.
We wanted ice cream, or we wanted gelato.
We didn’t want tea, nor did we want to go home.
We wanted tea, for it was tea time.
We wanted to see you, so we drove on over.
It was dark out, yet it wasn’t night.
Semicolons love justice.

We wanted ice cream; we didn’t get any.

My dog is the greatest; he brings my paper in every morning.

Studies have shown using semicolons correctly improves your grade; professors are impressed by it.
Semicolons love conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases.

I would like to go out and play; however, it has been raining for eight days.
I would like a puppy for my birthday; also, I would like a potato masher.
I am a good student; in fact, I passed Writing 121 without going to grammar jail.

Semicolons hate subordinating conjunctions

✓ What the blazes:
✓ Even though the child is really smart; she still couldn’t figure out subordinating conjunctions.
✓ After we ate ice cream; we ate gelato.

✓ This is advanced grammar wizardry, but we use it all the time. See p. 200.
Colons love injustice.

✓ We have four flavors available: vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, and mud pie.
✓ My classroom sucks for two reasons: not enough chairs and not enough candy.
✓ I can’t understand you: You’re crazy.
✓ Think of what Dad always said: “Get a job.”
Further quality reading:

- LB Brief handbook:
  - Run-ons: p. 294-298
  - Coordinating Conjunctions: p. 295-96; 311-12; 324
  - Semicolons: p. 326-30; 153; 295-97
  - Colons: p. 330-32