COMMA SPLICES

Comma splices are one of the most common errors in composition. Whereas a run-on contains no punctuation, a comma splice contains punctuation used incorrectly.

**Example:**  *Bob saw the tornado coming, he ran for the basement.*
The comma is improperly placed in this sentence because two independent clauses are joined only by a comma.

To correct a comma splice, use either a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon, or separate the clauses with a period:

**Corrections:**  *Bob saw the tornado coming, so he ran for the basement.*
This correction includes a coordinating conjunction following a comma. [independent clause], so [independent clause].

*Bob saw the tornado coming; he ran for the basement.*
This correction uses a semicolon between the two independent clauses. [independent clause]; [independent clause].

*Bob saw the tornado coming. He ran for the basement.*
This correction separates the two independent clauses with a period. [independent clause]. [independent clause].

**CAUTION:** A common error is the comma splice that involves the use of conjunctive adverbs such as consequently, however, besides, nevertheless, than, thus, still, and so on. To correct, use a semi-colon before conjunctive adverbs when they come between independent clauses.

**Comma Splice:**  *We had lunch at the Woodman, then we all went out to Lake Pomeran.*
**Correct:**  *We had lunch at the Woodman; then, we all went out to Lake Pomeran.*

**Comma Splice:**  *We were sure we’d be late, nevertheless, we got there before the curtain went up.*
**Correct:**  *We were sure we’d be late; nevertheless, we got there before the curtain went up.*

When words such as however, consequently, and nevertheless do not join independent clauses, do not use a semicolon. Simply put a comma before and a comma after the word.

**Wrong:**  *The senator’s wife; however, did not want him to run again.*
**Correct:**  *The senator’s wife, however, did not want him to run again.*

**Wrong:**  *All the avid fishermen; to be sure, would be out on the lake before dawn.*
**Correct:**  *All the avid fishermen, to be sure, would be out on the lake before dawn.*
Read the following examples, and observe why each is punctuated differently:

*Sally has the flu; therefore, she cannot attend class today.*
*(Therefore separates two independent clauses.)*

*John is, therefore, the best player we have on the team.*
*(Therefore does not join independent clauses.)*

*It seems to me, however, that there is no available transportation at that time of day.*
*(However does not join independent clauses. The "that" clause is dependent.)*

*I would like to go; however, there is no available transportation at that time of day.*
*(However separates two independent clauses.)*

It is important to know the distinction between two kinds of conjunctions or connecting words.

1. The coordinate conjunctions--*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.* (This is the complete list; there are no other coordinate conjunctions).

2. The conjunctive adverbs--*also, besides, consequently, however, therefore, likewise, nevertheless, then, thus, still.* (This is not a complete list)