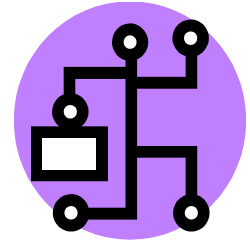


Quick Tip of the Week

Did you know . . .

A comma splice is not just a comma placed in the wrong part of a sentence. When your instructor tells you that you have a comma splice, it means you have two complete sentences that are connected by a comma rather than separated by a period (or a question mark/exclamation point).



For example:

Jon thought about his girlfriend, they had been dating for a long time.
Our car spat oil all over the road, undoubtedly, it was broken.

Checking for comma splices is simple! Just ask yourself several questions when you put a comma in a sentence. . .

1. Read the portion before the comma. Is there a subject, verb, and a complete thought conveyed? If so, guess what...that is a complete sentence all by itself!
2. Now, read the portion that comes after the comma. Does it also contain a subject, verb, and a complete thought? If yes, that is a complete sentence too.
3. Also read the portions before and after every conjunctive adverb or transitional expression (such as the word *undoubtedly* in the example above).

This would be corrected by simply adding the correct punctuation mark in place of the comma. So if we used the above examples again they would be corrected like this:

Jon thought about his girlfriend. They had been dating for a long time.
Our car spat oil all over the road. Undoubtedly, it was broken.

There are several other ways you can repair a comma splice. Such as:

- By including a coordinating conjunction between the two clauses (*for, and, nor, but, or, so*)
Our car spat oil all over the road, so undoubtedly, it was broken.
- Join the clauses with a semicolon.
Our car spat oil all over the road; undoubtedly, it was broken.
- Turn one independent clause into a dependent clause.
Jon thought about his girlfriend because they had been dating for a long time.
- Transform the two clauses into a single dependent clause.
Our broken car spat oil all over the road.

Any of these methods would create a grammatically correct sentence.

Another way to detect comma splices in your writing would be to try reading the essay or paragraph backwards (the last sentence first and so on). Be sure to read while focusing on grammar and structure rather than the content (pay attention to how smoothly you move through the text rather than on what you are saying or what information you are passing along in the essay).

One last good trick is to read your writing aloud. Read as normally as possible. Notice when you naturally stop to take a breath while reading. Is there a comma or a period in that section of your writing? Does it feel like you need to take a longer pause at any point when reading? This may indicate the completion of a thought...or a point where you would need to include a period as opposed to just a comma.

A Writers Resource: A Handbook for Writing and Research