

Comma Splice

APSU Writing Center Handout

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses (two complete sentences) are joined by a comma. This is a punctuation error because the reader expects the sentence to continue, but instead encounters another complete idea.

- **Comma Splice Example:** The students finished class at 12:30, they rushed to go home.

Independent Clause

A group of words that expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence.

- **Example:** The students finished class at 12:30.

Dependent Clause

A group of words that contains a subject and a verb but cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. It depends on an independent clause to make sense.

- **Example:** Because the students finished class at 12:30.

Correcting Comma Splices

Simply removing the comma does not correct the problem, as it creates a run-on sentence.

Below are ways to fix comma splices.

1. Use a Semicolon, Colon, or Dash

These marks can properly connect two closely related sentences.

Semicolon: The students finished class at 12:30; they rushed to go home.

Colon: The students finished class at 12:30: they rushed to go home as a result.

Dash: The students finished class at 12:30—they rushed to go home.

2. Use a Period

Write the two clauses as separate sentences.

- **Example:** The students finished class at 12:30. They rushed to go home.

3. Add a Coordinating Conjunction

Insert a conjunction (and, but, or, for, yet, so, nor) after the comma.

- **Example:** The students finished class at 12:30, so they rushed to go home.

4. Make One Clause Dependent

Turn one sentence into a dependent clause using a subordinating word such as because, when, or after.

- **Example:** Because the students finished class at 12:30, they rushed to go home.

5. Use a Semicolon and a Conjunctive Adverb

Combine two complete ideas with a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb such as therefore, however, and moreover.

- **Example:** The students finished class at 12:30; therefore, they rushed to go home.