

The Comma Splice

What is a Comma Splice?

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses (complete ideas) are connected with a comma.

A clause is a group of words with both a subject and a verb and can stand alone as a complete sentence.

A “splice” means to split, or to separate.

The Comma vs. The Comma Splice

The function of a comma is not to separate two different clauses, or complete ideas.

Instead, a comma is meant to **indicate a pause** between parts of a sentence. It is also used to **separate items in a list**.

The Comma vs. The Comma Splice

Example #1: Robert ate worms, Mary dislikes Robert.

“Robert ate worms” is an independent clause; it is a complete sentence that can stand on its own.

- **Robert** is the subject, and **ate** is the verb.

“Mary dislikes Robert” is another independent clause; it is a complete sentence that can stand on its own as well.

- **Mary** is the subject, and **dislikes** is the verb

The joining of these two independent clauses creates a comma splice.

Example #2: Grandma still bakes apple pie every Thanksgiving, she picks the apples fresh from the orchard.

“Grandma still makes apple pie every Thanksgiving” is an independent clause; it is a complete sentence that makes sense on its own.

- **Grandma** is the subject, and **bakes** is the verb.

“She picks the apples fresh from the orchard” is another independent clause; it is a complete sentence that can stand on its own.

- **She** (pronoun for Grandma) is the subject, and **picks** is the verb.

Solutions for the Comma Splice

There are four ways to solve the comma splice problem.

Solution #1: Use a period to make two complete sentences.

- Because comma splices contain two main clauses (ideas), you can always add a period at the end of the first clause to separate them.

Incorrect Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday, she has never missed a service in over 50 years.

Correct Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday. She never missed a service in over 50 years.

Solution #2: Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

- There are seven coordinating conjunctions you can use: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. Teamed with a comma, one of these seven conjunctions can be used to join two main clauses.

Incorrect Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday, she has never missed a service in over 50 years.

Correct Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday, and she has never missed a service in over 50 years

Solution #3: Use a subordinate conjunction.

- Similar to coordinating conjunctions, but different because it puts unequal stress on the two parts of the sentence (while, although, as, before, after, if, since, why, whether, once, that, unless and because).

Incorrect Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday, she has never missed a service in over 50 years.

Correct Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday as she has never missed a service in over 50 years.

Solution #4: Use a semicolon.

- If you want to capture two ideas in one sentence, a semi-colon can be used to separate them.

Incorrect Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday, she has never missed a service in over 50 years.

Correct Example

- Grandma still goes to church every Sunday; she has never missed a service in over 50 years.

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