

# 9. RUN-ON SENTENCES

How many sentences does the following group of words contain?

Marc went to town he bought a soda, then he walked home.

If you answered *one*, look again. The above group of words actually contains three complete thoughts and three sets of subjects and verbs. If properly capitalized and punctuated, these words should look like this:

Marc went to town. He bought a soda. Then he walked home.

## Definition

A **run-on sentence** consists of two or more sentences that are linked together without the correct punctuation. It is not a proper sentence because it doesn't stop when it should.

To correct run-ons, you must insert end punctuation and capital letters where they are needed. Look at the following run-on sentences and then look at the corrected versions of these sentences:

- 1a. The bird ate the worm afterwards, it flew away. (run-on)
- b. The bird ate the worm. Afterwards, it flew away. (two sentences)
  
- 2a. Claudette caught two trout her mother helped her clean them they ate the fish for dinner. (run-on)
- b. Claudette caught two trout. Her mother helped her clean them. They ate the fish for dinner. (three sentences)

**HINT** In order to avoid run-on sentences, it is important to look carefully at each sentence you write. If a sentence contains more than one idea, or if it contains several subjects and verbs, it might be a run-on. Be sure to use the proper end punctuation at the conclusion of each sentence and a capital letter at the beginning of each new one.

## RUN-ON SENTENCE EXERCISES

A. *Directions:* In the space following each group of words, write R if it is a run-on sentence and S if it is a sentence.

EXAMPLE: Eric ran to town he missed the bus. R

1. Socrates was a famous Greek philosopher. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Dan met Sue on the bus then they went to the beach. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The bear chased Stephanie, she climbed a tree just in time. \_\_\_\_\_
4. We have seen the movie before, we'd like to go again. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I don't believe in eating pretzels with a fork. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Mr. Rochester hired Jane Eyre to be a governess she fell in love with him. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Dark had fallen, it was a stormy night. \_\_\_\_\_
8. When I go to a play, I like to get there early. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I do not believe in ghosts, they don't really exist. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Go dig some clams at the beach bring them back here for dinner.  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. *Directions:* Turn the following run-ons into sentences by putting capital letters where sentences should begin and end punctuation where they should end.

EXAMPLE: Helen bought a house; <sup>S</sup> she loved it.

1. My house wasn't the same anymore it even smelled different.
2. We went to the fair every day you could go on three rides for a dollar.
3. Climbing the mountain was hard I would not do it again.
4. Sailing is her favorite sport each weekend she goes to the lake.
5. The magazine finally arrived now I can read my article.
6. The hurricane destroyed the house everyone inside it was saved.
7. You'd have to see it yourself I can't describe it in words.
8. The writer finished his book he began another one right away.
9. Most people buy pumpkins in the fall they carve them for Halloween.
10. The end of the spy story was exciting it kept me on the edge of my seat.

C. *Directions:* In the space after each group of words, write *R* if it is a run-on, *F* if it is a fragment, and *S* if it is a sentence.

EXAMPLE: In the dark woods. F

1. Riding out the storm on a cold, wild night. \_\_\_\_\_
2. After the party, Julie drove home with Miriam. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Daryl spent two weeks in the Soviet Union she thought it was a fascinating place. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Franklin Roosevelt won reelection in 1940, a year before the United States entered World War II. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I think I'll visit Sally maybe she'll want to take a walk. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Even though I had never seen such a beautiful sunset on a winter day. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Mamie fell from the tree she broke her arm. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Martin Luther King led the fight against racial discrimination in the 1950s and 1960s. \_\_\_\_\_
9. No, I think I'll stay inside, it's too hot to run. \_\_\_\_\_
10. On the far side of the river, chewing on a tree, the beaver. \_\_\_\_\_