To communicate your meaning clearly, you need to use accepted writing conventions to maintain boundaries between sentences. **Fragments**, **comma splices**, and **fused sentences** ignore the conventions of sentence boundaries. To be a sentence, a group of words must have at least one independent clause (as subject and verb that express a complete thought).

**Fragment**: a group of words that pretends to be a sentence. Fragments are common in speech and are sometimes used for special effect in writing, but in most cases fragments should be revised. To be a sentence, a group of words must have at least one independent clause.

Examples of fragments:

- After I completed the assignment for biology.
- Just what I knew would happen.
- Following the example of my older sister, a violinist.

To correct a fragment, either

- attach it to a sentence, which precedes or follows it
- turn it into a sentence.

**Comma Splice**: the separation of two independent clauses by a comma or by a comma and a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase.

Examples of comma splices:

- I avoided desserts, I was trying to lose weight.
- I like Italian food, however I don’t like the pasta dishes at the new restaurant.

To correct a fragment, any of the following actions can work:

1. Replace the comma with a semicolon.
2. Replace the comma with a period and make the clauses separate sentences
3. Add a coordinating conjunction after the comma
4. Restructure the sentence, making one independent clause a subordinate clause.
5. Restructure the sentence, making a single independent clause.
**Fused Sentence (Run-on or Run-Together Sentence):** two independent clauses with no punctuation between them.

Example of a fused sentence:

- I hesitated before I entered the contest I am not known for either my luck or my prowess.

To correct a fused sentence,
- If clauses are closely related, separate them with a semicolon (or, if appropriate, a colon).
- Separate clauses with a period.
- OR
- Restructure sentences, making one independent clause a subordinate clause.

**Use of Semicolons**

1. Use between closely related independent clauses when there is no coordinating conjunction.

   *Example:* The concert was boring; it lacked variety.

2. Use between independent clauses joined by conjunctive adverbs (transitional connectives).

   *Example:* He dropped out of F&M; however, he chose to remain in Lancaster.

3. Use between items in a series if there are commas within the series.

   *Example:* She had lived in Roanoke, Virginia; Scranton, Pennsylvania; and Dayton, Ohio.

4. *(Optional)* Use between independent clauses when there are commas within the clauses.

   *Example:* After he started home, he remembered his tennis racket; and he decided to return to Lancaster, a distance of sixty miles.
Sentence Combining Exercise

Combine the sentences below into an appealing description of a pizza. The spaces between the groups of sentences indicate where one of your sentences may end and another may begin. But you may ignore the spaces if you choose in order to make sentences longer or shorter. Take care to use dependent clauses and modifying phrases as you combine sentences.

1. The pizza sits in the middle of the table.
2. It is fresh from the oven.

3. Its crust rises up.
4. The crust is thick.
5. The crust is golden brown.
6. It is like a wall.
7. The wall surrounds the rest of the ingredients.
8. The sauce steams.
9. The sauce bubbles.
10. Its smell fills the room.
11. The smell is slightly sweet.
12. The pizza is covered with pepperoni slices.
13. They are shiny.
14. They are dappled.
15. They contrast with the sauce.
16. The sauce is dull red.
17. Mushroom slices rest in the sauce.
18. The slices are shriveled.
19. The slices are soft.
20. Their edges are slightly curved.
21. Green olives are scattered about.
22. Black olives are scattered about.
23. They dot the surface.
24. Cheese melts over the pizza.
25. The cheese is creamy.
26. It enmeshes everything in its weblike strands.
27. They trap the taste until someone releases them with a bite.

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