

Errors in Sentence Structure

Students commonly make three kinds of sentence structure errors: fragments, run-ons, and comma splices.

- 1) **Fragments:** Fragments are incomplete sentences. Very often, they consist of a subject without the predicate.

Example: The child who has a rash.

Example: Since the drugs have many side effects.

- 2) **Run-ons:** Run-ons are two independent clauses which are not joined in a grammatically correct manner.

Example: The doctor performed the operation the patient died.

- 3) **Comma splices:** Comma splices (CS) are two independent clauses that are joined by a comma, which is not a grammatically acceptable way to join independent clauses.

Example: The doctor performed the operation, the patient died.

How to Correct Sentence Structure Errors

Each of these types of errors can be corrected so that the sentences become grammatically correct sentences.

Fragment: The child who has a rash.

Fix #1: The child has a rash. (*remove “who”*)

Fix #2: The child who has a rash was just diagnosed with measles. (*add a predicate*)

Fragment: Since the drugs have many side effects.

Fix #1: The drugs have many side effects. (*remove “since”*)

Fix #2: Since the drugs have many side effects, the patient should be monitored. (*add a predicate*)

Run-on: The doctor performed the operation the patient died.

Fix #1: After the doctor performed the operation, the patient died. (*add a conjunction*)

Fix #2: The doctor performed the operation; the patient died. (*join with a semi colon*)

Fix #3: The doctor performed the operation. The patient died. (*create two sentences*).

Comma

Splice: The doctor performed the operation, the patient died.

Fix #1: Although the doctor performed the operation, the patient died. (*add a conjunction*)

Fix #2: The doctor performed the operation; the patient died. (*join with a semi colon*)

Fix #3: The doctor performed the operation. The patient died. (*create two sentences*).

Exercise: Correcting Sentence Structure Errors

Directions: Indicate if the sentence is A) correct B) a run-on C) a comma splice D) a fragment. Then correct any errors.

- ____ 1. Ulcerative colitis is an inflammatory condition it affects part or all of the large intestine.
- ____ 2. Ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory condition that affects part or all of the large intestine.
- ____ 3. Ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory condition, affects part or all of the large intestine.
- ____ 4. Though frequent flare-ups are also common.
- ____ 5. Fatigue and loss of appetite and/or weight, in addition to other symptoms that are not directly colon-related, such as inflammation.
- ____ 6. UC is generally diagnosed by sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, or barium enema.
- ____ 7. While a colonoscopy permits examination of the entire colon.
- ____ 8. The third commonly used test, the barium enema.
- ____ 9. A number of options available for treatment.
- ____ 10. A number of options available for treatment, these include steroids and immunosuppressants.
- ____ 11. Alternative mind/body treatments, such as biofeedback.
- ____ 12. Biofeedback is helpful in addition massage may be used.