RUN-ONS, COMMA SPLICES, AND FRAGMENTS

Proper sentence structure improves the clarity and overall quality of your writing. The main unit of a sentence is an independent clause, which contains at least one subject and one verb and can stand alone as a complete thought. Incorrectly formed or combined independent clauses can result in run-on sentences, comma splices, and sentence fragments.

**Identifying Errors in Sentence Structure**

1. **Run-on sentences** occur when two independent clauses are written together without being properly connected.
   
   a. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful* the birds chirped happily from the trees.

2. **Comma splices** happen when two independent clauses are joined only by a comma.
   
   a. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam,* they wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.

3. **Sentence fragments** are sentences that only have a dependent clause or lack a subject or verb in a clause.
   
   a. Since the weather is quite atrocious today.

   b. The ambulance, which sped down the highway as its sirens blared.

**Correcting Errors in Sentence Structure**

1. **Run-on sentences** can be corrected by adding a comma with a conjunction, connecting the two sentences with a semicolon, or dividing them into two sentences and adding ending punctuation.
   
   a. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful,* and the birds chirped happily from the trees.
b. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful; the birds chirped happily from the trees.*

c. *The hike through the Appalachian mountains was beautiful. The birds chirped happily from the trees.*

2. **Comma splices** can be corrected by adding a conjunction before the comma or by replacing the comma with ending punctuation or a semicolon where the two independent clauses meet.

   a. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam, and they wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.*

   b. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam; they wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.*

   c. *The students studied in the library all afternoon for their midterm exam. They wrote notes on the whiteboards and explained the concepts to each other.*

3. **Sentence fragments** can be fixed by transforming a dependent clause into an independent clause or by simply adding an independent clause. If a clause is missing a subject or verb, that element can be added to complete the sentence.

   a. **Dependent Clause:** Since the weather is quite atrocious today.

      i. The weather is quite atrocious today.

      ii. Since the weather is quite atrocious today, we decided to stay inside.

   b. **Lacks Verb:** The ambulance, which sped down the highway as its sirens blared.

      i. The ambulance, which sped down the highway as its sirens blared, arrived at the scene of the accident on time.

      ii. The ambulance sped down the highway as its sirens blared.