

# The Comma Splice

Recognize a *comma splice* when you see one.

A comma splice, also called a *run-on*, occurs when a writer has connected two main clauses with a comma alone. A main clause makes a complete thought, so you should not find a wimpy comma struggling to join two such powerful clauses.

The problem looks like this:

**MAIN CLAUSE** + , + **MAIN CLAUSE** .

Here is an example:

Fanning the slice of pizza with a napkin, Jolene waited for it to cool, she had already burned the roof of her mouth with the fried cheese sticks.

The first main clause is ***Jolene waited for it to cool***, and the second is ***she had already burned the roof of her mouth with the fried cheese sticks***. Notice that the two clauses have only a comma connecting them.

Fixing a comma splice is easy. All you have to do is pick one of the four available strategies.

First, you can break the error into two separate sentences, like this:

Fanning the slice of pizza with a napkin, Jolene waited for it to ***cool***. ***She*** had already burned the roof of her mouth with the fried cheese sticks.

Another good option is to connect the two main clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

Fanning the slice of pizza with a napkin, Jolene waited for it to ***cool, for*** she had already burned the roof of her mouth with the fried cheese sticks.

You can also use a semicolon, a mark of punctuation as powerful as a period:

Fanning the slice of pizza with a napkin, Jolene waited for it to ***cool; she*** had already burned the roof of her mouth with the fried cheese sticks.

Your last option is to use a subordinate conjunction. This method reduces one of the two clauses to an *incomplete* thought:

Fanning the slice of pizza with a napkin, Jolene waited for it to *cool* *since she* had already burned the roof of her mouth with the fried cheese sticks.



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