

FUSED SENTENCES AND COMMA SPLICES

THE FUSED SENTENCE error occurs when two or more independent clauses (I-C) are joined without a coordinating conjunction (cc) and without any punctuation at all:

Leroy won the lottery he decided to buy a car.

I-C

I-C

THE COMMA SPLICE occurs when two or more independent clauses (I-C) are joined with a comma (,) but without a coordinating conjunction (cc) :

Leroy won the lottery, he decided to buy a car.

I-C

I-C

REPAIRING SENTENCE ERRORS: FUSED SENTENCES AND COMMA SPLICES

Because fused sentences and comma splices occur when two main clauses are joined incorrectly, you can correct either error using **one of five** methods:

METHOD 1: Punctuate the Independent Clauses as two separate sentences, using a period (.):

Leroy won the lottery. He decided to buy a car.

I-C . **I-C**

METHOD 2: Separate the Independent Clauses using a comma (,) and a coordinating conjunction (cc):

Leroy won the lottery, **so** he decided to buy a car.

I-C , **cc** **I-C**

METHOD 3: Separate the Independent Clauses using a semi-colon (;) only:

Leroy won the lottery; he decided to buy a car.

I-C ; **I-C**

METHOD 4: Separate the Independent Clauses using a semicolon (;), a conjunctive adverb (c-a), and a comma (,):

Leroy won the lottery; **therefore**, he decided to buy a car.

I-C ; c-a , I-C

Only use a semicolon with conjunctive adverbs when you are separating independent clauses. Don't make the mistake of thinking you need to use a semicolon every time you see a conjunctive adverb. For instance, the following sentence contains a conjunctive adverb, but since the conjunctive adverb does not precede an independent clause, use of a semi-colon would be incorrect:

Leroy has decided, however, not to buy a car with his lottery winnings.

Another potential pitfall: placing the semi-colon in the wrong position, as in the following sentence:

Leroy won the lottery, therefore; he decided to buy a car.

Incorrect

METHOD 5: SUBORDINATION (Advanced!)

Change **one** of the independent clauses to a subordinate or **dependent clause (D-C)** by beginning it with a **subordinating conjunction** or a **relative pronoun** (see page 108)

There are two options here, and the punctuation is different depending on which option you choose.

Option 1: You can begin the sentence with a dependent clause (D-C), in which case you add a comma (,) after the opening dependent clause:

When Leroy won the lottery, he decided to buy a car.

Option 2: You can end the sentence with a dependent clause, in which case no comma is needed:

Leroy decided to buy a car **after** he won the lottery.
I-C (no comma) D-C

Please note that by changing one independent clause to a dependent clause, you no longer have a compound sentence. Rather, you have created a **complex sentence**.