



## The Comma Splice!

One of the writing problems that students struggle with the most is the comma splice.

First of all, you must understand that a comma splice is not just a comma error. It is actually a sentence error, which is a completely different type of problem.

**What on earth does that mean?**

**Well, it means that other comma errors involve either not having a comma where you need one, or having a comma where you don't need one.**

**For example:**

**When I am stressed I want chocolate.**

**This sentence contains a comma error -- I failed to use a comma where there should be one.**

When I am stressed, I want  
chocolate. ↑

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Now the following is an  
example of a comma error in  
which I've used a comma where  
there shouldn't be one:

Jake always tries, to be on  
time. ↑

There is no rule that says you  
need a comma in this sentence,  
so there shouldn't be one.



before the comma, is an **independent** clause.

Jake always tries to be on  
time.

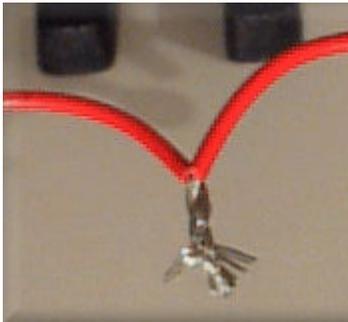
In other words, it could stand on its own as a sentence.

Now look at the clause that comes after the comma.

He is very responsible.

This is another independent clause. Therefore, what we

have is 2 independent clauses that have been “spliced” together using a comma. Unfortunately, a comma is not a strong enough punctuation mark to join together independent clauses. Look at it this way.



This is an example of how NOT to splice together two wires. Basically, they've just been twisted together, and

this is not a strong enough method to really make these two wires into one. It is comparable to trying to "splice" together two independent clauses into one sentence using nothing more than a comma.

Now, look at this picture:



This is an example of the right way to splice together two

wires into a single wire. Here we see that the two wires have been taped together using electrician's tape.

Just as we need something that has the strength to join together two wires, like electrician's tape, so we need a punctuation mark strong enough to join together two independent clauses into one sentence. That punctuation mark is the **semicolon**.

Jake always tries to be on  
time; he is very responsible.



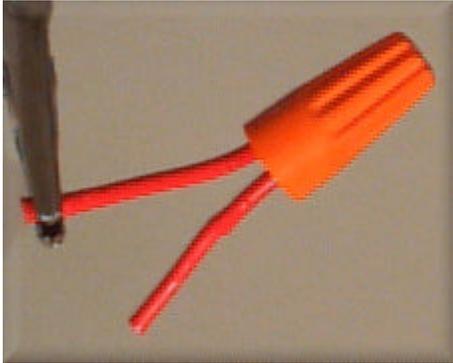
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Of course, we could decide to  
keep the two **wires** separate.  
Likewise, keeping the two  
**clauses** separate as two  
sentences is an option:

Jake always tries to be on  
time. He is very responsible.



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There is a third option. In the above picture, the wires have been joined using a **wire nut** to join the two wires. The wire nut is much stronger than just twisting the wires together.

Likewise, we can use a **conjunction** to join together

two independent clauses into one sentence:

Jake always tries to be on time **because** he is very responsible.

In this sentence, the conjunction **because** is joining the two clauses together, making one sentence. The connection is a little different, perhaps - it is a little more complete, a little more definite than the semicolon - but more important, it is much stronger

and better than simply trying to use a comma.

# Therefore

**A comma splice is two independent clauses joined together with nothing more than a comma. The comma, however, is not tape or a wire nut. In other words, it doesn't have the strength to join together two independent clauses into one sentence.**

**For more information that might help you learn how to recognize comma splices and how to avoid them, check out the following link:**

[Reviewing clauses](#)