

The Comma Splice

What Is a Comma Splice?

A comma splice is particular kind of [comma mistake](#) that happens when you use a comma to join two independent clauses. Here's an example:

***Incorrect** - Koala bears are not actually bears, they are marsupials.*

How can you tell that's a comma splice? Look at the group of words before the comma.

Koala bears are not actually bears

Did you notice that this group of words can stand by itself as a complete sentence? That means it's an **independent clause**.

Now look at the group of words after the comma.

They are marsupials

This group of words can also stand by itself as a complete sentence. It's another independent clause.

When you have two independent clauses, a comma is not strong enough to glue them together.

How to Fix a Comma Splice

There are three common ways to fix a comma splice. Let's look at a new example:

Incorrect - I am not angry with you, I am not happy with you, either.

Fix #1: Add a Conjunction

One way to fix a comma splice is to add a [conjunction](#) immediately after the comma. With most comma splices, the conjunction you'll want to add is probably ***and***, ***but***, or ***so***.

Correct - I am not angry with you, but I am not happy with you, either.

Fix #2: Change the Comma to a Semicolon

If adding a conjunction doesn't seem to work, you can change the comma to a [semicolon](#) instead. Unlike commas, semicolons *are* strong enough to glue two independent clauses together.

Correct - I am not angry with you; I am not happy with you, either.

If you decide to use a semicolon, make sure there is a close, logical connection between the two independent clauses.

Fix #3: Make Separate Sentences

If adding a conjunction doesn't seem to work and using a semicolon feels too stuffy, you can fix a comma splice by simply making each independent clause a separate sentence.

Correct - I am not angry with you. I am not happy with you, either.

More Examples of Comma Splices

Here are a few more examples of comma splices and possible corrections.

Incorrect - I'm thinking of skipping communications, it's really boring.

Adding a conjunction like *and* or *but* after the comma in the sentence above doesn't really make sense. But there does seem to be a close, logical connection between the first independent clause (*I'm thinking of skipping communications*) and the second independent clause (*it's really boring*). This is the perfect situation for a semicolon.

Correct – I'm thinking of skipping communications; it's really boring.

You could also break those two independent clauses apart and make them separate sentences.

Correct – I'm thinking of skipping communications. It's really boring.

Incorrect - Dan was late, we left without him.

In this case, the conjunction **so** fits the bill.

Correct - Dan was late, so we left without him.

Or you could use a semicolon.

Correct - Dan was late; we left without him.

Or you could make two sentences, especially if you want to sound blunt.

Correct - Dan was late. We left without him.

[Ready for some practice?](#)