**What is a comma splice?**

An independent clause is a word group with a subject and a verb that can stand alone as a sentence. There are special rules for joining independent clauses listed below. Comma splices incorrectly join two independent clauses with a comma.

Example:

*A comma splice uses a comma to link two independent clauses, this is incorrect punctuation.*

Both “halves” of this sentence could stand alone as individual sentences, so these independent clauses cannot be joined with just a comma.

**How can I tell if I have a comma splice?**

1. Does your sentence contain two independent clauses (groups of words that could stand alone as a sentence)? If you answered
   - NO, then you don’t have a comma splice. If you answered
   - YES, then go on to number 2.

2. Are the clauses in your sentence joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so *(hint: remember FAN BOYS)*)? If you answered
   - YES, then you don’t have a comma splice. If you answered
   - NO, then go on to number 3.

3. Are the clauses in your sentence joined with a semicolon? If you answered
   - YES, then you don’t have a comma splice. If you answered
   - NO, then you need to revise your sentence; it’s a comma splice.

**Ok, so I have a comma splice. What can I do to fix it?**

Basically, you have four choices:

**Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).**

*A comma splice uses a comma to link two independent clauses, but this is incorrect punctuation.*

**Use a semicolon** (or, if appropriate, a colon or a dash).

*A comma splice uses a comma to link two independent clauses; this is incorrect punctuation.*

**Make the independent clauses into separate sentences.**

*A comma splice uses a comma to link two independent clauses. This is incorrect punctuation.*

**Restructure the sentence so that you no longer have two independent clauses.**

*Although it is incorrect punctuation, some writers use a comma splice to link two independent clauses.*