W. L. Adams Center for Writing

Punctuating Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** is one that includes at least two independent clauses. An incorrectly punctuated compound sentence can lead to run-on or fused sentence errors, as well as comma splice errors.

Run-on/Fused: *Some students want an education others simply want a degree.*
Comma splice: *Some students want an education, others simply want a degree.*

You can avoid these errors by choosing one of three ways to create correctly punctuated compound sentences: a **coordinating conjunction**, use a **semicolon**, or use a **conjunctive adverb**.

coordinating conjunction: To connect and indicate the relationship between the independent clauses, use coordinating conjunctions such as *and, or, but, for, nor, yet,* and *so*. Insert a comma before the conjunction only when the conjunction precedes an independent clause as in this case. If the coordinating conjunction precedes an dependent clause, DO NOT include a comma.

Correct: *Some students want an education, but others simply want a degree.*
Incorrect comma use: *Some students want an education, or simply a degree.* "Simply a degree" is a dependent clause because it has no subject. Who "simply wants a degree"?

semicolon: Use no conjunction but place a **semicolon** between the two independent clauses *only if they are related to each other*.

Correct: *Some students want an education; others simply want a degree.* This sentence shows contrast. The semicolon stands in place for conjunctions such as *but* and *while*.

Incorrect: *Create a separate title page; the "running head" is no longer required by APA for student papers.* These two clauses discuss different aspects of APA style and thus are not entirely related.

conjunctive adverb: To indicate the relationship between the two independent clauses, use a conjunctive adverb**,** placing a semicolon before the conjunction and a comma after it.
Correct: Some students want an education; however, others simply want a degree.

Conjunctive adverbs include the following:

moreover
however
therefore
besides
nevertheless as
a result
furthermore
instead
consequently in
addition   on the
contrary

thus indeed
on the other hand
in conclusion in
fact otherwise in
other words
similarly in
contrast of course
certainly

for example then
meanwhile
for instance first,
second, third
finally to illustrate
next that