

How to use varied and correct sentence structures

Before you begin

What you need:

Related text: **“Seven Wonders” by Lewis Thomas**

Exit with Success and *The Bare Essentials Plus* (optional)

Approximate time this exercise should take you: **30 minutes**

Reminder

Using correct sentence structure is a very important part of expressing yourself well. You must always remember that when you are writing an essay, you should be using formal English. Writing for a specific purpose, such as writing about a literary text, is quite different from the English you might use in casual conversation. You are expected to write in complete sentences. Furthermore, strong writing uses sentences of differing lengths and levels of complexity while weak writing uses the same sentence pattern repeatedly and thus becomes monotonous. English Exit Exam graders will look for sentence variety (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, and parallel structure sentences). You must also pay attention to your use of punctuation in order to maintain correct sentence structure.

The following exercise provides practice in identifying and correcting run-on sentences.

Run-on sentences fall into three categories. The true run-on sentence occurs when a writer crowds too many clauses and words into one sentence. Including more than two independent clauses may make your sentence difficult to read and understand (see sentence #2 below). Run-ons often also include the following sentence errors:

- Fused sentences consisting of two or more independent clauses that have been joined without punctuation, coordinating or subordinating conjunctions (see sentence #3 below)
- Comma splice sentences that join independent clauses with a comma (see sentence #5 below)

Instructions

Fixing run-on, fused and comma-splice sentences

Re-write the following faulty sentences using one of the techniques listed. Try to use each technique at least once.

- A. Use a capital and period
- B. Use a comma and joining word/conjunction (and, but, for or, nor, so, yet)
- C. Use a semi-colon to join two or more independent clauses.
- D. Use subordination. Add a dependent clause before or after an independent clause.
- E. Use a semi-colon and a transitional word or phrase: however, therefore, nevertheless, consequently, moreover, furthermore, on the other hand, in addition, as a result, etc.

Exercise

Here is an example:

Comma-Splice Error

Lewis Thomas is a medical doctor, he has written several books about the wonders of science.

Corrected Version

Lewis Thomas is a medical doctor, and he has written several books about the wonders of science. (a **comma** and the conjunction **and** were added to the sentence)

1. Thomas uses definition as a technique at the beginning of the essay, his list of wonders will focus on the seven things he wonders about the most.

2. The bacteria live and reproduce in temperatures higher than 300 degrees C, scientists have normally ruled out the possibility of any life surviving that heat because DNA and enzymes are all destroyed at that temperature and if there can be life at that temperature then there might still be life on Venus.

3. The only way to destroy the bacteria is to cool it down to boiling temperature that is the temperature we normally use to destroy bacteria by heat.

4. She finds a mimosa tree, chews a slit in the branch, deposits her eggs in the cavity, chews the branch so it dies, she performs all these essential tasks in exactly the right way and order and Thomas wonders how evolutionary theory might be challenged by this phenomenon.

5. He is struck by how little we know about nature, and wonders how the oncideres- mimosa tree symbiotic relationship could have developed, it is clearly beneficial to both the beetle and the tree.

6. CJ virus and the scrapie virus develop their degenerative effect slowly the illness begins to show about a year and a half after the infection.

7. Thomas saves his first wonder for last to give suspense to his essay, by the time he gets around to naming the planet Earth as the first wonder he has already left the reader filled with awe at the mystery of life.

8. The single termite is insignificant, when many termites gather they become a single organism with a complex architectural skill controlled by chemical signals.

9. As I read about these many wonders, I am constantly reminded of why I believe in God as He could design these amazing phenomena and even Thomas wonders whether evolutionary theory can explain the oncidere beetle's complex behaviour.

10. When human beings form small collectives such as families we are capable of productive cooperation we must learn to be productive and cooperative when we are joined in very large numbers in nation states.

Answer key

These are suggested revisions.

1. Thomas uses “definition” as a technique at the beginning of the essay, **and** his list of wonders will focus on the seven things he wonders about the most. (correction type B)
2. The bacteria live and reproduce in temperatures higher than 300 degrees C; **however**, scientists have normally ruled out the possibility of any life surviving that heat because DNA and enzymes are all destroyed at that temperature. **If** there can be life at that temperature, then there might still be life on Venus. (correction type E)
3. The only way to destroy the bacteria is to cool it down to boiling temperature; that is the temperature we normally use to destroy bacteria by heat. (correction type C)
4. She finds a mimosa tree, chews a slit in the branch, deposits her eggs in the cavity, and chews the branch so it dies. She performs all these essential tasks in exactly the right way and order; **therefore**, Thomas wonders how evolutionary theory might be challenged by this phenomenon. (correction types A and E)
5. **Even though** he is struck by how little we know about nature and wonders how the oncideres mimosa tree symbiotic relationship could have developed, it is clearly beneficial to both the beetle and the tree. (correction type D)
6. CJ virus and the scrapie virus develop their degenerative effect slowly; the illness begins to show about a year and a half after the infection. (correction type C)
7. Thomas saves his first wonder for last to give suspense to his essay; **consequently**, by the time he gets around to naming the planet earth as the first wonder, he has already left the reader filled with awe at the mystery of life. (correction type E)
8. The single termite is insignificant; **however**, when many termites gather, they become a single organism with a complex architectural skill controlled by chemical signals. (correction type E)

9. As I read about these many wonders, I am constantly reminded of why I believe in God. **H**e could design these amazing phenomena. **E**ven Thomas wonders whether evolutionary theory can explain the oncideres beetle's complex behaviour. (correction type A for both)
10. When human beings form small collectives such as families, we are capable of productive cooperation. **b**ut we must learn to be productive and cooperative when we are joined in very large numbers in nation states. (correction type B)