

Sentences

Booster 2: Writing correct complex sentences – avoiding comma splices

Key learning

A comma splice is when a comma is incorrectly used to join two sentences. Look at the example:

Main clause

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I sent my application form in late, I was pleased to get an invitation to the open day.

Each clause is one main idea (or main clause) and should be a sentence on its own.

To 'fix' the error, you can:

1. Make two simple sentences each with one idea.

I sent my application form in late. I was pleased to get an invitation to the open day.

2. Join the sentences together using a conjunction.

I sent my application form in late, so I was pleased to get an invitation to the open day.

Now you can have a comma after 'late' because the second part of the sentence ('so I was pleased to get an invitation to the open day') does not make sense on its own.

Worked example:

One of the sentences below has a comma splice. Find it and rewrite it correctly.

1. I am writing for information about your product, I am interested in buying a new bike.
2. Emailing to ask for product information is a good idea, but it's not the only option.

Answers:

1. This is a comma splice. Think about whether you can replace the sentence with a full stop. If you can, then the comma is used incorrectly. Correct example:
I am writing for information about your product as / because / since I am interested in buying a new bike.
2. This sentence is correct. You cannot replace the comma with a full stop.

Your turn:

1. Decide whether each sentence below requires a conjunction, a full stop, or if it is already correct. Then rewrite the incorrect sentences to include your corrections.
 - (a) Even though volunteering is not always free, it's a fantastic way to experience a festival.
 - (b) You might have to work long shifts, there will still be plenty of time to enjoy events.
 - (c) You can apply online, you'll have to be over 18.
2. Now write **two** more correct complex sentences of your own on the same subject.