Techniques for Spotting Problem Sentences

1. For the fragment, ask yourself: “If someone were to say or write this to me, would I expect the person to add to the statement or rephrase it?”

2. In checking for the comma splice or run-on, ask yourself, “Is there a point in this word group at which I can insert a period and create a sentence on either side?” The question is not necessary if there is a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) at that point.

3. If you have trouble with comma splices and run-ons, check these constructions as you revise:
   a. A comma preceded by a noun or pronoun followed by a noun or pronoun
   b. A sentence beginning with a subordinating conjunction

4. If you have trouble with fragments, look for these clues:
   a. A word group with a single verb ending in -ing
   b. A word group without both a subject and a verb

5. Use the grammar checker on your computer to alert you to possible problem sentences. Then use instruction from this book to make the necessary corrections.

CHAPTER REVIEW
CORRECTING FRAGMENTS, COMMA SPLICES, AND RUN-ONS

Fragments

1. A correct sentence signals completeness; a fragment signals incompleteness—it doesn’t make sense. You expect the speaker or writer of a fragment to say or write more or to rephrase it.

2. A dependent clause cannot stand by itself because it begins with a subordinating word.

   Because he left.
   When she worked.
   Although they slept.

3. A verbal phrase, a prepositional phrase, and an appositive phrase may carry ideas, but each is incomplete because it lacks a subject and a verb.

   Verbal Phrase: having completed his initial research
   Sentence: Having completed his initial research, he refined his outline.

   Prepositional Phrase: in the store
   Sentence: She worked in the store.
Appositive Phrase: a successful business

Sentence: Marks Brothers, a successful business, sells clothing.

4. Each complete sentence must have an independent clause, a group of words that contains a subject and a verb, and can stand alone.

   He enrolled for the fall semester.

Comma Splices and Run-Ons

1. The comma splice consists of two independent clauses with only a comma between them.

   Maria exceeded her sales quota, she received a bonus. [A comma by itself cannot join two independent clauses.]

2. The run-on differs from the comma splice in only one respect: It has no comma between the independent clauses.

   Maria exceeded her sales quota she received a bonus. [Independent clauses must be properly connected.]

Correcting Comma Splices and Run-Ons

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) to correct the comma splice or run-on.

   Maria exceeded her sales quota, and she received a bonus.

2. Use a subordinating conjunction (such as because, after, that, when, although, since, how, till, unless, before) to make one clause dependent and correct the comma splice or run-on.

   Because Maria exceeded her sales quota, she received a bonus.

3. Use a semicolon (with or without a conjunctive adverb such as however, otherwise, therefore, similarly, hence, on the other hand, then, consequently, also, thus) to correct the comma splice or run-on.

   Maria exceeded her sales quota; therefore, she received a bonus.

   Maria exceeded her sales quota; she received a bonus.

4. Use a period to replace a comma and add a capital letter (to correct a comma splice), or use a period between two independent clauses and add a capital letter (to correct a run-on).

   Maria exceeded her sales quota. She received a bonus.