
Grammar: run-on sentences

With the Writing Development Centre

Full stops are used to indicate the end of a sentence: a grammatically complete statement that makes sense in its own right.

Full stops

Short sentences can make powerful points because they are brief and simple. However, because of their abrupt nature, having multiple short sentences together can sound clumsy and affect cohesion (“flow”).

For example:

This subject area is relatively under-theorised. More research is necessary. This would help to gain further insight into this area.

However, beware of run-on sentences. These are grammatically incorrect because they contain two complete statements linked by a comma and presented as one sentence. For example:

This subject area is relatively under-theorised, more research is necessary to gain further insight into this area

The grammatically correct version would be:

This subject area is relatively under-theorised. More research is necessary to gain further insight into this area

Techniques to try

To fix run-on sentences, you could do the following:

- Consider whether the use of a full stop would address the issue without making the style too choppy.
- Link the two statements with a connecting word (a coordinating conjunction), such as ‘and’ or ‘but’, to create one longer sentence (a compound sentence). For example: This subject area is relatively under-theorised and more research is necessary to gain further insight.
- To soften the connection between two simple sentences, a semi-colon can also be used (see the separate guides on the use of semi-colons and colons).

Want to review your study strategies?

[Book a one to one appointment](#) with us for personalised study advice tailored to you, your subject and level of study.