Comma Splices

What is a Comma Splice?

A comma splice occurs when you try to combine two complete sentences (or complete thoughts) with just a comma. The comma is not a strong enough punctuation mark to join two sentences by itself; it needs help. Here is an example of a comma splice:

My closest friend wanted to learn the English language, now she is more fluent than I am.

There is a complete thought on each side of the comma. There is not a conjunction. Therefore, you have a comma splice.

Proofreading Strategy

Use the Control-Find function of Microsoft Word. Hold down the CTRL Key and the F Key at the same time. A dialogue box will open up. Type a comma in the search bar. Click Find.

The CTRL+F search will find every single comma in your paper. When you look at each comma, ask yourself if there is a complete thought on each side of it. If there is, then there should be a conjunction after it. If there is not a conjunction, then you have found a comma splice.

How to Correct a Comma Splice

- Substitute a semicolon for the comma (the semi-colon is stronger)
  - My closest friend wanted to learn the English language; now she is more fluent in the language than I am.

- Substitute a period for the comma (the period is stronger)
  - My closest friend wanted to learn the English language. Now she is more fluent in the language than I am.

- Keep the comma, but insert a conjunction such as but, and, or, nor, for, so, or yet after it
  - My closest friend wanted to learn the English language, and now she is more fluent in the language than I am.

- Rewrite the sentence
  - When my closest friend wanted to learn the English language, she became more fluent in the language than I am.