Run-On Sentences and Fragments

These are two of the most common errors on SAT essays. They are formed by

incorrectly joining two or more independent clauses (complete sentences that

should stand on their own) or by leaving out either the subject or verb from a

sentence.

*Run-Ons*

*I was on the soccer team, I enjoy playing golf.*

This sentence contains two independent clauses (*I was on the soccer team*, and

*I enjoy playing golf*). Because they can stand alone, they can’t be joined with a

comma. Run-on sentences can be corrected by breaking them into two or more

complete sentences, by adding a conjunction (a connecting word such as *and*,

*but*, *yet*, or *so*), or by changing the punctuation. Here’s a correct version followed

by another example:

*I was on the soccer team, and I also enjoy playing golf.*

*When spring break is over, we will get back to work, there will be plenty of*

*studying to do before finals.*

The clause *when spring break is over* is correctly attached to *we will get back*

*to work* with a comma. But the independent clause *there will be plenty of studying*

*to do before finals* cannot be joined to the first part of the sentence with only

a comma. It is a complete sentence that can stand alone, so if it remains part of

the longer sentence, it must be connected with a period or semicolon.

*Fragments*

Fragments are groups of words that are presented as sentences but lack a subject,

a verb, or both.

*The well-dressed man. Walked to school in the rain.*

In the first fragment, the verb is missing. All we have is a subject. What did

the well-dressed man do? In the second fragment, the subject is missing. Who

walked in the rain? To correct sentence fragments, determine what is missing

(subject or verb) and add it, or change the parts of speech to convert a word into

the missing part. Note that number of words has nothing to do with distinguishing

fragments from sentences—fragments can be long!

**Instead of:** *My older sister Ellen, who traveled to Japan.*

**Write:** *My older sister Ellen traveled to Japan.*

**Instead of:** *Taking a taxi when it is raining to keep her shoes from being*

*ruined by the water.*

**Write:** *Taking a taxi when it is raining keeps her shoes from being ruined by the water.*