**Joining Independent Clauses**

*What is an independent clause?*

An independent clause is a **complete sentence**; it includes a subject (the actor) and a predicate (the action).

The **subject** of a sentence names who or what the sentence is about. The simple subject is always a noun or a pronoun; the complete subject consists of the simple subject and any words or word groups modifying the simple subject (*A Writer’s Reference,* 6th ed.542).

The **predicate** consists of a verb plus its objects, complements, and modifiers (*A Writer’s Reference,* 6th ed.542).

Example 1: The complete subject is underlined and the complete predicate is bolded.

Her final exams **are complete**.

Example 2: The simple subject is underlined and the simple predicate is bolded.

Her final exams **are** complete.

*What is a dependent clause?*

A dependent clause is an **incomplete sentence**; it usually includes either a subject or a predicate. Sometimes dependent clauses have neither.

Example 1: The dependent clause only has a subject.

Her final exams

Example 2: The dependent clause only has a predicate.

**are** complete

Example 3: The dependent clause appears to have both a subject and a predicate.

After her final exams are complete

While this appears to be an independent clause, the word *after* makes this sentence a dependent clause. Words that reflect time or place tell us that the action is performed during a certain time or at a certain place, but they never tell us who is doing the action or what the action is.

*There are 5 ways to separate independent clauses:*

1. **A period**

Her final exams are complete. She is ready for vacation.

1. **A semi-colon**

Her final exams are complete; she is ready for vacation.

1. **A comma plus a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS)**

Her final exams are complete, and she is ready for vacation.

1. **An em dash**

Her final exams are complete—she is ready for vacation.

1. **A colon**

Her final exams are complete: she is ready for vacation.

*Avoid comma splices and run-on sentences!*

If two independent clauses are not properly separated in a sentence by one of the five ways listed, this can create a comma splice or a run-on sentence.

Example 1: Since there are two subjects and two predicates, a form of punctuation is needed. This is called a run-on sentence..

Her final exams **are** complete she **is** ready for vacation.

Example 2: Since there are two subjects and two predicates, a comma can not go between the two. This is called a comma splice.

Her final exams **are** complete, she **is** ready for vacation.