## WRITING GUIDE

## "Sentence crimes": Identifying and correcting fragments, comma splices, and run-ons

Sentence boundary errors are among the most common errors writers struggle with. They're called "boundary errors" because they are problems with accurately punctuating sentences so that they are complete and have clear "boundaries." They're such serious errors that Rita Smilkstein referred to them as sentence crimes (Tools for Writing, Orlando: Harcourt, 1998).

There are three major sentence crimes: fragments (frag), comma splices (CS), and run-ons (RO) (also called "fused sentences").

Even good writers have trouble with sentence boundaries. Sometimes they crop up when writers begin writing more complicated sentences about more complicated material—as we do in college!

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A clause is a group of words that includes a subject-verb pair and additional words or phrases that "complete" the idea. Some clauses start with a word (such as "if," "because," or "when") that makes them unable to stand on their own as sentences.



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