



# University of Abdelhafid Boussouf Mila Cellule e-learning



English – Master1

## Lesson 03 Common Sentence Errors

### Objectives of the Lesson

- To raise students' awareness about the common errors and mistakes which are committed at the level of sentences.
- To differentiate between the types of sentence errors.
- To learn techniques of avoiding such errors as a way towards improving their writing skills.

## Common Sentence Errors

### 1. Consider the following sentences :

- Algeria and Egypt both have large geographical spaces they are still developing countries.
- Cats and dogs belong to a nice family of animals which are called pets.
- Staying late at night is a bad habit and it can affect your mental and physical health and many of your body systems will be programmed differently, and you will suffer a disease called insomnia.
- He left. Yesterday night. Without saying goodbye.
- She will not buy the perfume she does not like it.

**Note:** All these sentences are grammatically incorrect. To correct them one should identify where the sentence error is. What the type of this error is. And how a correct sentence looks like.

### 2. Sentence Errors:

**A/** There is no comma, semi-colon or a conjunction in the first sentence. This makes it a grammatically incorrect sentence. This type of sentence errors is called **run-on sentences<sup>i</sup>**. It can be corrected as follows:

#### **Correction:**

- ✓ **Algeria and Egypt both have large geographical spaces, they are still developing countries.**
- ✓ **Algeria and Egypt both have large geographical spaces; they are still developing countries.**
- ✓ **Algeria and Egypt both have large geographical spaces; however, they are still developing countries.**

**B/** There is something repetitive in the second sentence. **Pet** is used to describe nice and friendly animals and there is a repetition of the meaning of „pet“. This sentence error is called **choppy sentences<sup>ii</sup>**. It is corrected as follows:

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**Correction:**

- ✓ **Cats and dogs belong to the pets family.**

C/The third sentence error is visible in the usage of the conjunction „and“ many times. This makes the sentence very long, and much like pulling a string. This type of errors is called **stringy sentences**<sup>iii</sup>. It is corrected either by adding conjunctions like “however, because, but, thus, moreover, as a result of, as long as...etc” or commas (,) and periods (.).

**Correction:**

- ✓ Staying late at night is a bad habit. It can affect your mental and physical health. Many of your body systems will be programmed differently; as a result of that, you will suffer a disease called insomnia.
- ✓ Staying late at night is a bad habit; it can affect your mental and physical health. Many of your body systems will be programmed differently, thus you will suffer a disease called insomnia.

D/ The fourth sentence error is noticed in the use of separated parts to form a sentence. This error is called **fragmented sentence or „Fragments“**<sup>iv</sup>. Each of these fragments can not stand alone to form a complete sentence.

**Correction:**

- ✓ He left yesterday night without saying goodbye.

E/The fifth sentence error is noticed when there is no comma that sets each sentence apart from the other. This type of errors is called **comma splice**<sup>v</sup>. There are two complete sentences in the example above; they can be separated out by putting a comma between them.

**Correction:**

- ✓ She will not buy the perfume, she does not like it.

**Remark:** run-on sentences, choppy sentences, stringy sentences, fragmented sentences and comma splices are only some common sentence errors. There are some others which can not be covered in this lesson.

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<sup>i</sup>See, Sentence Types and Errors, Writing Center, Beirut. Retrieved from [Wrting.center@lau.edu.lb](mailto:Writing.center@lau.edu.lb)

<sup>ii</sup>See, Choppy Sentences, Center for writing, University of Minnesota. Retrieved from <http://writing.umn.edu>

<sup>iii</sup>See, Stringy Sentences by Ron Johnson, L.T.L. Tutoring central. Retrieved from [www.tutoringcentral.com](http://www.tutoringcentral.com)

<sup>iv</sup>See, Correcting Comma Errors in Sentence Structure, The Writing Center, The Ohio State University. Retrieved from <http://cstw.edu>

<sup>v</sup>Ibid.