Common Writing Errors... And How to Avoid Them

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Comma Splices

A comma splice is connecting two complete sentences (clauses) with only a comma.
Comma Splices

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes, the patients with the lower dose had worse outcomes.”
Comma Splices

To join two complete sentences (clauses), you need to:

1. Add a conjunction after the comma
   OR
2. Split the clauses into two sentences
   OR
3. Change the comma to a semicolon
Comma Splice Fixes

1. Add a conjunction after the comma.

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes, and the patients with the lower dose had worse outcomes.”
Comma Splice Fixes

2. Split the clauses into two sentences.

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes. The patients with the lower dose had worse outcomes.”
3. Change the comma to a semicolon.

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes; the patients with the lower dose had worse outcomes.”
Acceptable Conjunctions
Conjunctions:
Yes!

- and
- but
- or
- nor
- so
- because
- yet
Conjunctions: Yes!

- and
- but
- or
- nor
- so
- because
- yet

The comma comes before these conjunctions. Don't add a comma after these conjunctions.
Conjunctions:

No!

- however
- therefore
- thus
- unfortunately
Conjunctions: No!

These are actually conjunctive adverbs.

- however
- therefore
- thus
- unfortunately
Let's talk more about "however."

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes, however the sample size was very small.”
Let's talk more about "however."

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes, but the sample size was very small.”
Let's talk more about "however."

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes. However, the sample size was very small.”
Let's talk more about "however."

“The patients with the higher dose had better outcomes; however, the sample size was very small.”
Use simple language.
Use simple language.

may

might

“The pharmacists might use the new software as early as January.”
Use simple language.

“This study used data from a 2010 paper by Dr. Jane Tanaka.”
“We are very excited about this new phase,” said Dr. Mateo.
Other Common Errors
Formatting a range:

“The patients ranged in age from 8-24.”
“The patients ranged in age from 8 to 24.”
“The patients’ ages were 8-24.”

“This study was conducted from January-May 2018.”
“This study was conducted from January to May 2018.”
“This study was conducted January-May 2018.”
“Between” vs. “among”

**Between** compares two things.

“The differences between the green group and the blue group were significant.”

**Among** compares three or more things.

“There was a lot of variation in hair color among Jane, Akeela, Maggie, and Parminder.”
Compound adjectives:

When they come before the noun, they should be hyphenated.

“pharmacy-specific guidelines”
“physician-guided education”
“high-efficacy medications”
“low-performing strategies”
“patient-specific therapies”
Compound adjectives:

When they come before the noun, they should be hyphenated.

“pharmacy-specific guidelines”
“physician-guided education”
“high-efficacy medications”
“low-performing strategies”
“patient-specific therapies”

One exception: Compound adjectives that start with a “ly” adverb are not hyphenated. (“locally produced conference,” “highly effective dose, etc.”)
Use active voice.
Use active voice.

New patients are seen via telehealth.

Doctors see new patients via telehealth.
Use active voice.

Medication concerns are discussed with a pharmacist.

Patients discuss medication concerns with a pharmacist.
Use active voice.

A welcoming atmosphere is created by the large windows at the clinic.

The clinic's large windows create a welcoming atmosphere.
Use active voice.

It is estimated that 60% of patients had a positive experience at the walk-in clinic.

We estimate that 60% of patients had a positive experience at the walk-in clinic.
Thanks!
Be well.
Survey for PSW!

https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1SlP8W5eVrcrcxw