
How to deal with run-on sentences

文章中如何避免使用连写句

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What is a run-on sentence? In short, a run on sentence is a poorly constructed sentence that either ignores some rules of grammar or tries to connect too many ideas into a single sentence.

什么是连写句？简而言之，连写句就是一种结构不佳的句子。这类句子通常不符合语法规则，或者就是试图将过多的想法都写在一句话之中。

This sentence is an example of a poorly written run-on sentence, it lacks a connecting word.

It should be written like this:

上面这句话应该这样写：

This sentence is an example that is not a run-on sentence, because it has a connecting word.

Run-on sentences do not have to be long. They simply are not well developed. Other run-on sentences simply connect too many ideas into a single sentence. Such sentences are easy to find in the scientific literature.

连写句不一定都很长，只是没有写好。还有一些连写句是在一句话里加入了过多的内容。这种句子在科学文献中很常见。

Why are run-on sentences a problem? As noted above, run-on sentences either have poor grammar or try to present too many ideas. The reader becomes lost and cannot remember the ideas being presented. When many ideas are patched together into one long sentence, this can confuse the reader. The reader has to sort out many different ideas lumped together as a single sentence.

为什么连写句有问题呢？如上所述，连写句要么是语法有问题，要么是试图表达过多的内容。读者就不容易记住句子所想表达的含义。当许多的内容被拼凑成一个长句时往往会把读者搞糊涂了

。读者不得不将这些堆在一句话中的很多内容都整理出来。

Before we criticize writers for making long sentences, let ' s discuss what makes a good long sentence. Writers are often taught that long sentences make better writing than short sentences.

在我们批评写长句的作者之前，先来讨论一下什么是没有问题的长句子。作者们学写作时通常会学到，长句比短句好。

I will provide some examples. I will make those examples as I write. These sentences are an example. My writing style is short and choppy. The example uses italics. They are also indented like this sentence so they stand out from the other text.

In that in the example above, I have used a series of short and choppy sentences to propose several ideas. Now, how can those ideas be constructed into a good, easily readable sentence.

在上面这个例子中，我用了一系列简短但不连贯的句子来表达几个内容。如何能够将这些内容组合成一句让读者能够轻松读懂的句子呢？

Here I provide a second example, again using italics and inset text that combines the same ideas into one longer sentence; this sample sentence is no longer choppy.

In the last example, above, I had tried to show you a method that can be used to make good, long sentences. I have used a semicolon to make a longer sentence. Semicolons are used to combine to complete ideas (two complete sentences) into one long, but grammatically correct, sentence.

刚才这个例子中，我试着教了你一种可以用来写长句的方法。我用了一个分号来写长句。分号可以将两个完整的内容（两个完整的句子）组合成一个语法正确的长句子。

Conjunctions are also used to make longer sentences by connecting two different ideas with words such as and, or, for, but, so, however. Scientific papers also use adverbs to connect ideas, such as therefore, however, thus. Rather than concentrate on grammar, I ' d rather talk about how these words are used and mis-used to make long sentences. Before we go farther, let ' s take a look at an actual run-on sentence; some of the sample sentences below have been modified to disguise the writer and topic, but came from recently edited research papers.

连词也可以用来使句子变得更长，比如使用and, or, for, but, so, however等词汇来连接不同的内容。科学论文也可以用副词来连接不同的内容，比如therefore, however, thus。与其纠结在语法上，我更愿意来谈谈这些词汇在长句中的正确使用和误用。在接下去讲之前，我们先来看看一句连写句。下面这个例子来自最近编辑的研究论文，但是为了去掉作者和课题信息，有些句子已经有所改动。

However, the methods used to collect specimens here had four disadvantages: first, the specimens were

collected from local parks, so they were not representative of other disturbed habitats; second, the sample sizes were not large enough to provide representative plants of the species occurring in those parks, for example, the numbers of sample sedge specimens was very limited including only 14 specimens for all 30 sites represented; third, the amount of collection effort varied widely between sites, ranging from 11 to 156 specimens per site; fourth, the types of species were strongly biased toward woody species, with an obvious neglect of many hard-to-identify groups such as sedges mentioned above and an almost complete lack of bryophytes.

This type of sentence structure is often seen in scientific papers. It contains an initial statement followed by a series of ideas that are separated by commas. This can often be used effectively, but many authors try to stuff too many ideas into such long sentences. In addition, authors sometimes add extra words and ideas that add little to the meaning of the sentence. In this case, this form of writing can still be used with fewer words, or the sentence can be broken into several sentences. The following example breaks the above sentence into parts but still contains the main ideas within the original sentence.

这类结构的句子经常出现在科学文章中。它起头是一个陈述句，然后是用逗号分隔的一系列不同的内容。这种句型很有用，但许多作者试图在这样一句话里填充太多的内容。此外，作者们有时还会添加一些额外的单词和不增加什么意义的内容。在这种情况下，这类句型仍然可以用，但要少用几个词，或者可以将一句话拆分成几个句子。以下这个例子就是将上一个例句分成了几个部分，但是仍然包含了原文的内容。

However, the methods used to collect specimens here had four disadvantages. First, because the specimens were collected only from local parks, they failed to represent other disturbed habitats. Second, the sample sizes were inadequate. For example, sedge collecting was very limited including, with only 14 specimens for all 30 sites represented. Third, the amount of collection effort varied too widely, ranging from 11 to 156 specimens per site. Fourth, woody species were over-represented while many hard-to-identify groups such as sedges and bryophytes were obviously under-represented.

What has changed? The number of words dropped from 117 to 85 without any loss in meaning. More importantly, long and wordy descriptions were eliminated. In particular, the second and fourth ideas were shortened markedly. Here is another long, run-on sentence followed by a shortened version.

有哪些改变呢？单词数从117降到了85，但是原文的意思全都保留了。更重要的是，又长又啰嗦的表述被去掉了，特别是第二和第四句明显地缩短了。下面是另一个长连写句，随后是简化版。

Each site was divided into five plots, we chose five twigs from each of 20 trees that were between 10 to 15 years old in each plot and collected fully developed needles from branches near the tree crown and then needles were cut off and wrapped up use gauze while needles were collected around midday and immediately frozen in liquid nitrogen, and stored at -80°C until analysis.

That sentence definitely confuses the reader, starting by talking about five plots and ending in the freezer.? No wonder the reader gets lost. The sentence presents several ideas: 1) each site had five plots, 2) samples were collected from 20 trees in each plot, 3) twigs were collected from near the tree crown, 4) needle collection was described, and 5) needle storage was described.

这句话肯定会使读者感到迷惑。以五块地开头，然后结尾时变成了冰箱，也就难怪读者会迷糊了

。这句话表述了这么几个意思: 1) 每个站点都有五块地, 2) 样本是从每块地中的20棵树上收集的, 3) 从靠近树冠的地方收集树枝, 4) 针叶收集方法的描述, 5) 针叶储存方法的描述。

What is wrong with this example sentence? The first comma separates independent sentences. It should be a period. Then, a long and complex process is described in one very long sentence. This should be broken into a series of logical steps. In this case, first, second, and third could be used for each step (as is done in an earlier example), or other words can join the steps as is shown in the following example.

这个句子有什么问题呢? 第一个逗号分隔的是两个独立的句子, 所以应该用句号。然后是用一个很长的句子描述一个长而复杂的过程。这应该被分成一系列符合逻辑的步骤。在这种情况下 first, second, and third 可以用于每个步骤(就如前一个例句), 或者如下面的例句一样用一些其它词将这些步骤连接起来:

First, each site was divided into five plots. We chose five twigs from each of 20 trees that were between 10 to 15 years old in each plot. Then, fully developed needles were from branches near the tree crown. The needles were cut off and wrapped up use gauze. This was done around midday; needles were immediately frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -80°C until analysis.

? Some journals will require that any sentence longer than three lines be broken into shorter sentences. While this extreme is not always necessary, any time a sentence is longer than three lines, the author should ask him or herself the following questions. Does this sentence try to join too many ideas? Can I use a semicolon to separate independent ideas? Have I used words that connect ideas, such as therefore, in addition, perhaps, however?

一些期刊会要求将任何长于三行的句子分成短些的句子。虽然这有些极端, 不见得总是有必要, 但是当一句话长于三行时, 作者都应该问自己以下这几个问题。是否在一句话中添加了太多内容? 是否可以用分号来分隔相对独立的内容? 是否用了像 therefore, in addition, perhaps, however 这样的词来连接句子?

Lastly, I would like to end with a series of short examples of run-on sentences, each followed by a correct example and a few notes. The sentences describe themselves and provide examples.

最后, 我想举几个比较短的连写句的例子。每一句之后都列出了正确的写法和注意事项。这些句子既是自我描述又是例子。

错误: Incorrect: Use a conjunction to connect two sentences you will avoid creating a run-on sentence.

正确: Correct: Use a conjunction to connect two sentences and you will avoid creating a run-on sentence. 用连词来连接两个句子, 这样可以避免连写句的产生。

错误: Incorrect: For a series of ideas use a semicolon and number the ideas this can be done by using a series of steps and use and before the last number.

正确: Correct: Several ideas follow: 1) a semicolon introduces a series of ideas, 2) numbers are added for

emphasis, 3) ideas are presented using a series of steps, 4) each idea is numbered, and 5) the word and is added before the last number. 多个内容的时候用如下的方法：1) 用分号来引入一系列的内容，2) 添加数字来强调，3) 将许多内容以一系列步骤的方式来呈现，4) 给每一个内容编号，5) 在最后一个编号前加一个and。

错误：Incorrect: Use a semicolon to separate distinct ideas (independent clauses) this allows you to avoid having a run-on sentence.

正确：Correct: Use a semicolon to separate distinct ideas (independent clauses); this allows you to avoid having a run-on sentence.

用分号来分隔不同的内容（独立分句），这样可以让你避免写出连写句。

错误：Incorrect: Avoid long and complex sentences that join too many ideas because this will confuse the writer and it will also make your ideas very hard to follow because you are trying to say too much in a single sentence and your reader will end up very confused especially if you repeatedly use the word and so that the whole idea gets lost as does your reader.

正确：Correct: Avoid long and complex sentences that join too many ideas because this will confuse the writer. It will also make your ideas very hard to follow because you are trying to say too much in a single sentence. Your reader will end up very confused especially if you repeatedly use and. The whole idea gets lost as does your reader. 避免加入太多的内容使句子变得冗长复杂，那样只会把读者搞糊涂。也会因为一句话里有太多东西而使你的句子难以理解。特别是如果你反复使用and，你的读者会被搞得晕头转向，你要表达的意思也就被淹没了。

Few writers use sentences that are too short. Much more commonly, long sentences connect too many ideas with the result that the reader loses their way and becomes confused. A writer should assume the reader will easily become confused. It is better to make the mistake of writing sentences that are too simple rather than ones that are long, complex, and confusing.

很少有作者会使用过短的句子。比较常见的就是一个长句包含太多内容，结果把读者弄晕了。作者应该假设读者是很容易被弄晕的，与其写一些冗长复杂，把人搞晕的句子，还不如将句子写得过于简单。

As while all writing, editing is important. Re-reading your own writing, especially if you read it to someone else, will always help you catch errors. The author of this article once had someone bring a copy of something he had written to him. My co-worker asked, What does this sentence mean?

而所有的写作，编辑都是很重要的。重读你自己所写的，特别是如果你读给别人听，总是可以帮你发现错误。我曾经给别人看过我写的一份东西。我的同事问我：这句话是什么意思？

I read the sentence, then I responded, I know two things. First, I wrote it. Second, I have no idea what it means!

我读了那句话，然后回答说：我只知道：
第一，这句话是我写的；第二，我完全不知道它是什么意思！

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