




Saving the semi-colon



Let's begin with a simple sentence:

Grandma stays up too late.



Now let's expand on that a bit:

Grandma stays up too late. She's afraid she's going to miss something.

This is OK. Two independent ideas, separated by a full stop.



What if we try to combine the two ideas?

Grandma stays up too late, she's afraid she's going to miss something.

Something's wrong. We connected two independent clauses with only a comma. The dreaded ***COMMA SPLICE!***

We could insert a coordinating conjunction:

Grandma is afraid she'll miss something, so she stays up too late.

This is better! Note the comma that accompanies the coordinating conjunction.



We could also try subordinating one of these ideas:

Grandma stays up too late **because** she's afraid she's going to miss something.

Notice that the **comma** disappeared. One idea (the second one) now depends on the other; it has become a subordinate clause.

But let's try something else.

ENTER THE SEMICOLON!



Let's try using a **semicolon** in this sentence.

Grandma stays up too late **;** she's afraid she's going to miss something.

Notice there is **no conjunction** used with this semicolon – either subordinating or coordinating.

Just the semicolon, all by itself.



Put four semi-colons in this

It was mid-October; the sun was shining; there was a feel of rain in the air. I was wearing my light blue suit; it was the one I wore on my last case. I wasn't exactly looking for trouble even so trouble had a way of finding of me. I entered the room; It was empty not a mouse was stirring.