Run-On Sentences and Comma Splices

A sentence is a group of words that functions as a unit. Sentences are made up of two main parts:
   The subject names the person, place, thing, or idea that the sentence is concerned with.
   The verb makes a statement about the subject. The predicate is everything after the subject, including the verb.

Example:
   (subject)                             (predicate)     [the verb is underlined]
   The thickly forested area / was irresponsibly harvested by the lumber company.

Sentences function in two main ways:
   1) The subject can perform some action as stated in the verb.
      The boy kissed the girl.
   2) The sentence can work to describe the subject.
      The cat is asleep.
      The man spoke.

FYI: There are many variations on these patterns, and sentences are usually much more complex than these, but these patterns are the most common you will see.

Run-on sentences happen when there is more than one sentence (grouping of subject and verb on a single topic that makes sense standing on its own) joined together with improper punctuation or without punctuation at all. The following show the most common types of run-on sentences. These have two complete thoughts that are closely related in content joined into a single sentence.

   We worked hard, it got done.  (improper punctuation, comma splice)
   The stranger asked for help and I wanted to help him.  (no punctuation, fused sentence)

There are several easy ways to correct the most common types of run-on sentences:
   1) Make the run-on into two separate sentences.
      We worked hard.  It got done.
   2) Separate the two parts of the run-on with a semicolon.
      We worked hard; it got done.
   3) Separate the two parts of the run-on with a comma and a coordinating conjunction
      (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so – FANBOYS is an easy way to remember these)
      We worked hard, and it got done.
   4) Revise the run-on so that one part cannot stand on its own.
      By working hard, it got done.

A comma-s splice is a specific kind of run-on that students often make. When you separate the two (possible) sentences with only a comma, you create a comma splice. To fix this particular run-on, you may use any of the strategies mentioned above.

A fused sentence is another specific kind of run-on that students often make. This happens when the two sentences (also called independent clauses) are joined only with a coordinating conjunction (remember those FANBOYS?), but no punctuation. To correct this type of run-on, simply add a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

The stranger asked for help, and I wanted to help him.