

Semicolons and Colons

Semicolons

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There are two main uses for semicolons:

1. **Joining two or more complete sentences that are not joined by a conjunction (connecting word). Semicolons can help emphasize the relationship between the two sentences and make it sound less choppy.**
 - Ex: I went to the shoe store today because there was a big sale; I walked out with five pairs of shoes!
2. **Separating items in a list when some of those items already contain commas.**
 - Ex: Some of Jesus' disciples included Peter, a fisherman; Matthew, a tax collector; and Judas Iscariot, who ultimately betrayed Jesus.

Colons

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Colons often introduce an elaboration or present an idea. They may also introduce a list.

1. **Connect two complete sentences when the second sentence summarizes or elaborates on the first.**
 - Ex: Apple is one of the most profitable companies in the world: it is worth \$99.8 billion.
2. **To introduce or draw attention to a list, quotation, or example.**
 - Ex: I am going to Target to buy some school supplies: pens, pencils, binders, notebook paper, and a calculator.
 - In the movie *Forrest Gump*, Forrest says this memorable quote: "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get."
 - Being captain of the baseball team taught me two important things: leadership skills and communication skills.

Relevant Resources

Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook*. 9th ed., The Modern Language Association of America, 2021.

Purdue University. "Brief Overview of Punctuation." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*, 2022, owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/punctuation/index.html.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "Semicolons, Colons, and Dashes." *The Writing Center*, 2023, writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/semi-colons-colons-and-dashes/

