

Semi-colons and Colons

The **semi-colon** separates two independent clauses (complete sentences) when a conjunction is not used:

Examples: Shaniqua passed the English test, but she failed the chemistry test.

(The conjunction **but** is used.)

Shaniqua passed the English test; she failed the chemistry test.

(A **semi-colon** is used instead of a comma and a conjunction.)

Cautions:

- The **semi-colon** should not be used as part of the introduction of information.
- Over-use of the semi-colon can be distracting for the reader
- When using introductory words such as “however” and “therefore” after a semi-colon, a comma should follow the introductory word. The comma joins the introductory word to the second independent clause.

Example: I eat vegetables almost every day; **however**, I do not enjoy the taste of them.

Tip: A semi-colon may be used to correct a comma splice (an error that occurs when two independent clauses {complete sentences} are joined only by a comma). However, the relationship between the two sentences must be clear. Another choice to correct a comma splice is to use a comma with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS-for, and, nor, but, or yet, so). In this case, the conjunction indicates the relationship between the two independent clauses.

Colons are used to introduce explanatory statements or lists. They signal the reader that information is forthcoming.

- It should be used **only after an independent clause** (complete sentence).
- It may be used **to separate introductory information from a long quotation.**
- It is used **between the title of a book and the subtitle.**
- In literary references, a colon may be used **between the place of publication** and the name of the **publisher.**

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