

# Using Semicolons and Colons

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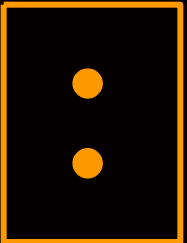
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# Why are semicolons and colons important?

Like other punctuation marks, semicolons and colons are important because they help make writing clear. ▼



The semicolon signals a pause in a sentence. ▼



The colon tells the reader "get ready for what's next."



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# Why are semicolons and colons important?

The letter below is hard to read because it is missing semicolons and colons. ▼

Dear Garden Club Members:  
It's that time of year again; our vegetable garden awaits. Please show up at the site this Saturday morning at 7:30. If you can, bring the following: hoe, shovel, weed-puller, and gloves. ▼



Notice how much clearer the letter is when semicolons and colons are added. ▼

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# Semicolons between independent clauses

Use a semicolon between independent clauses if the independent clauses

- are closely related in meaning **and** ▼
- are not joined by *and, but, for, nor, or, so, or yet* ▼

Independent clause

Independent clause

The clouds are moving in; let's head home.



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# Semicolons between independent clauses

Remember: Use a semicolon to join independent clauses **only** if the clauses are closely related. ▾

**Incorrect**

Do not touch that tree frog;  
everyone stay together.

These two clauses aren't closely related. ▾

**Correct**



Do not touch that tree frog;  
it may be poisonous.

These two clauses are closely related. A semicolon can be used to join them. ▾

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# Semicolons between independent clauses

## On Your Own

Add semicolons where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. Bring a sweater it will be cold tonight.
2. Your grades have improved you will easily pass the course.
3. His mother is a doctor his father owns a computer store.
4. Suki finished her homework then she went to Dana's house.

Answer

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# Semicolons between independent clauses

Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by a **conjunctive adverb** or a **transitional expression**. ▼

Kim loaded the camera incorrectly; **therefore**, the film was ruined. ▼

I like cotton; **in fact**, most of my clothes are made of cotton. ▼

Notice that the conjunctive adverb and the transitional expression are followed by commas.

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# Semicolons between independent clauses

## On Your Own

In the following sentences, add semicolons or replace commas with semicolons where needed. If a sentence is already correct, label it C.

1. My dog can do many tricks for example, he can roll over and crawl on his belly.
2. The best defensive players are Carlos, Will, and Fred, however, Matt and Jamal are great on defense.
3. I have to study tonight; otherwise, I would go with you.
4. I've decided not to take French, instead, I plan to take Spanish.

Answer

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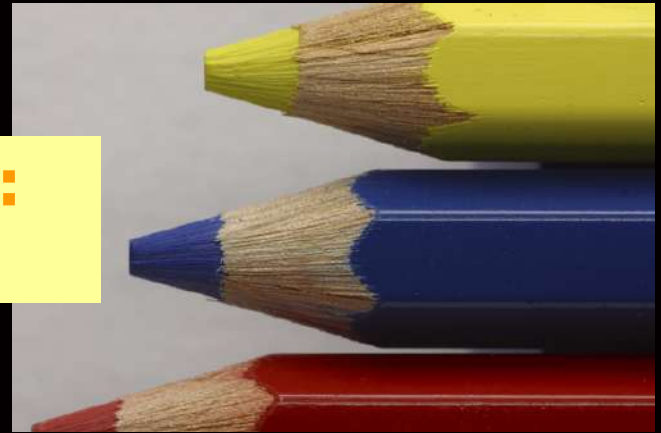
# Colons before lists of items

Use a colon before a list of items, especially after expressions such as *the following* and *as follows*. ▾



Please bring the following to class tomorrow: your writing journal, a pen, and your imagination.

The primary colors are as follows: red, blue, and yellow.



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# Colons before lists of items

Do not place a colon right after a verb. ▾

Verb

**Incorrect**

Marcelo's hobbies **include**: fishing, hiking, and painting. ▾

**Correct**

Marcelo's hobbies include fishing, hiking, and painting. ▾

**Correct**

Marcelo's hobbies include the following: fishing, hiking, and painting.

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# Colons before lists of items

Do not place a colon right after a preposition. ▾

Preposition

**Incorrect**

Last fall we traveled **through**: New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. ▾

**Correct**

Last fall we traveled through New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. ▾

**Correct**

Last fall we traveled through the following states: New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

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# Colons before lists of items

## On Your Own

Add colons where they are needed in the following sentences. If a sentence is already correct, label it C.

1. We visited the following cities Memphis, Little Rock, Dallas, and Shreveport.
2. The recipe for the stew called for lamb, carrots, potatoes, and onions.
3. A good baby sitter will have certain qualities common sense, interest in children, and reliability.

Answer

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# Conventional uses of colons

Use a colon in certain conventional situations. ▼

**Between the hour and the minute in times**

8:15 this evening

6:00 in the morning



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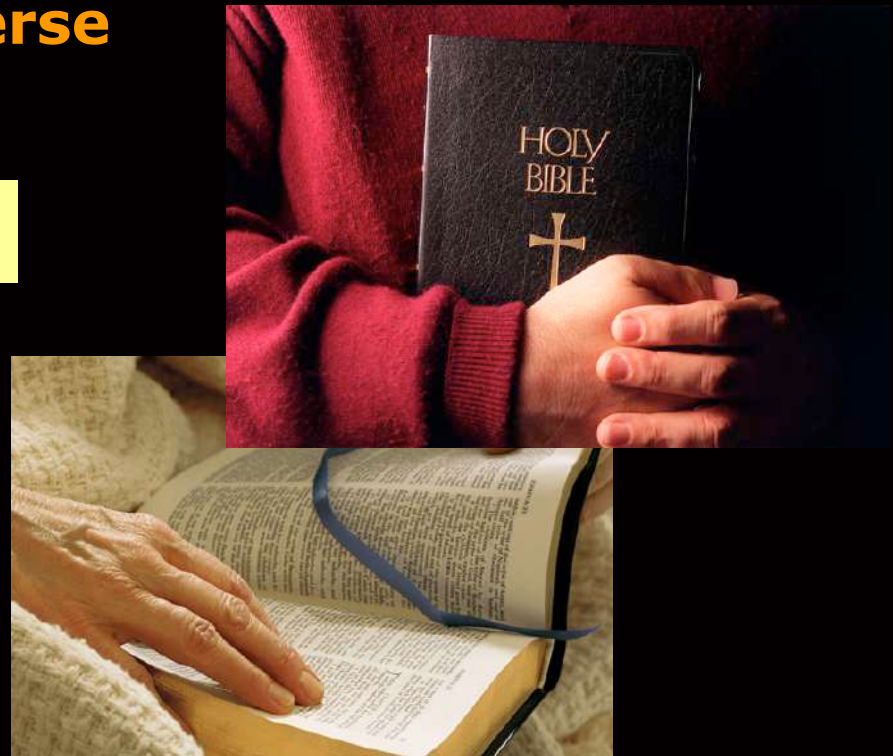
# Conventional uses of colons

Use a colon in certain conventional situations. ▼

**Between chapter and verse  
in biblical references**

I Chronicles 22:6–19

Matthew 6:9–13



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# Conventional uses of colons

Use a colon in certain conventional situations. ▼



**After the salutation of a business letter**

Dear Ms. Weinberg:

Dear Sales Manager:

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# Conventional uses of colons

## On Your Own

Add colons where they are needed in the following sentences.

- 1.The letter began "Dear Sales Manager I am having a problem with a product from your store."
- 2.Dad woke us up at 5 45, and we left for the lake at 7 00.
- 3.Then the minister recited John 3 16.
- 4.Please call me by 5 15 tomorrow.

Answer

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# Review A

In the following sentences, add semicolons or replace commas with semicolons where needed.

1. A blizzard hit late that morning, by noon the roads were covered with snow and ice.
2. It's too cold to go for a walk besides, I need to finish my book report today.
3. Aunt Terry loves hiking she often spends the entire day in the mountains.
4. Joanna, your team will be called *The Hornets* my team will be called *The Dragons*.

Answer

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## Review B

Add colons where they are needed in the following sentences. If a sentence is already correct, label it C.

1. Add these items to your shopping list tissues, toothpaste, and shampoo.

2. Do you really know Ruth 1 16 by heart?

3. A good friend should be honest, loyal, and kind.

4. The concert began at 8 10 and was over at about 9 30.

5. For the cover letter I wrote "Dear Sir or Madam My entry form is enclosed."

Answer

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**The End**

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