

Basic Semicolon Rules

Use a semicolon between independent clauses (complete sentences) in a sentence if they are not joined by *and, but, or, nor, yet*.

1. A semicolon can also take the place of a period between two closely related, complete sentences (independent clauses). Use a semicolon to separate the two independent clauses

I hope to perform well on the ACT; the college I like requires a high score.

2. Use a semicolon between items in a series if the items contain commas.

My friends' birthdays fall on April 3, 1990; April 4, 1991; and April 5, 1992.

Basic Colon Rule

Use a colon to mean *note what follows*.

1. Use a colon to introduce a list of items (when a list immediately follows a verb or preposition, DO NOT use a colon)

You are required to bring a few items on the camping trip: a tent, a sleeping bag, warm clothing, and a flashlight.

Incorrect Colon Usage

The items you need to bring are: a tent, a sleeping bag, warm clothing, and a flashlight.

In the sentence above, “are” is a verb and using a colon after a verb would be incorrect.