

Semicolons and colons

Semicolons :

1. Use a semicolon to combine two complete sentences (independent clauses) without a conjunction.  
ex. Pam felt confident going into the test; she had studied very hard.
2. Use a semicolon to separate items in a list that contain commas.  
ex. On our vacation we visited San Francisco, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington.  
ex. Beth Meyers, a freshman at Penn State; Hugh Gibbons, a high school senior; and Fran Kirby, a secretary, were contestants on the show.
3. Use a semicolon to separate complete sentences that are joined by a conjunctive adverb.  
Conjunctive adverbs: in addition, thus, nevertheless, therefore, still, however, indeed, furthermore  
ex. Jane likes fruit; however, she does not like apples.

Colons :

1. Use a colon to introduce items in a list  
ex. Grandfather always grew a variety of vegetables: tomatoes, beans, cucumbers and carrots.
2. Use a colon to introduce a quotation that is formal or lengthy or not preceded by a verb that shows speech.  
ex. The judge nodded slowly: "Case dismissed."
3. Use a colon to introduce a sentence that summarizes or explains the sentence before it.  
Ex. In conclusion the speaker emphasized her main point: Leash laws protect dogs as well as people.
4. Use colons to introduce a formal appositive.  
ex. She showed slides of the most isolated spot on Earth: Antarctica.

Remember!

The part of the sentence before the colon should be able to stand alone.

Example:

- Incorrect: Three of my friends are: Mary, Bob, and Tim.  
Correct: I have three good friends: Mary, Bob, and Tim.
- Incorrect: On vacation we will be going to: Houston, Dallas, and Austin.  
Correct: On vacation we will be going to the following cities: Houston, Dallas, and Austin.

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Comma Usage

Learning how to use the comma can be simplified if you remember four simple rules. To remember the rules, all you need to know is **LEAF**.

**L**ists

Use commas to separate items in a list.  
Ex. Sally, Mike, and Joe went shopping.

**U**nnecessary words

Use commas to set apart unnecessary words from the rest of the sentence.  
Ex. Sally, the girl who sits behind me in class, works at the mall.

**C**ombining sentences

Use commas to combine two complete sentences. (You must also use a conjunction, e.g. and, but or or.)  
Ex. I was going to do my homework, but my dog ate my book.

**I**ntroductory phrases

Use commas after introductory phrases.  
Ex. Every day after school, I visit my grandmother.

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