

## THE SEMICOLON AND THE COLON

### The Semicolon

Use a semicolon between closely related independent clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction.

**Example:** Some of the inmates were young and strung out on drugs; others looked as if they might kill at any moment.

Use a semicolon between independent clauses linked with a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase.

**Example:** I learned all the rules and regulations; however, I never really learned to control the ball.

Use a semicolon between items in a series containing internal punctuation.

**Example:** Classic science fiction sagas are Star Trek, with Mr. Spock and his large pointed ears; Battlestar Galactica, with its Cylon Raiders; and Star Wars, with Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and Darth Vader.

### The Colon

Use a colon after an independent clause to direct attention to a list, an appositive, or a quotation.

**A list:**

The daily routine should include the following: twenty knee bends, fifty sit-ups, fifteen leg lifts, and five minutes of running in place.

**An appositive:**

My roommate is guilty of two of the seven deadly sins: gluttony and sloth.

**A quotation:**

Consider the words of John F. Kennedy: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

Use a colon between independent clauses if the second summarizes or explains the first.

**Example:** Faith is like love: it cannot be forced.

Source: Hacker, Diana. The Bedford Handbook for Writers. Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1991