

# Semi-Colons & Colons

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Only use semi-colons and colons when you know exactly why you are using them.

## Semi-colon

**Connects two closely related, complete sentences.**

- *Rosario brought decorations to work that day; she wanted the Writing Center to look festive.*

**Separates listed items if the items themselves use commas.**

- *Daniel compiled a list of his favorite cities, which included Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; and San Francisco, California.*

## Colon

**Introduces a list at the end of a complete sentence.**

- *Morgan took inventory of the decorations: snowflakes, trees, and bells.*

**Introduces a quotation after a complete sentence.**

- *Katherine began to explain: "We like to change the decorations every holiday."*

**Introduces an answer (or an appositive).**

- *One person volunteered to bring food for everyone: Maddie.*

**Introduces a complete sentence that modifies a prior sentence.**

- *Sarah had a superpower: it was time control.*

**Follows a salutation in a formal letter.**

- *Dear Editors of the Oregonian:*

**Separates titles and subtitles.**

- *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*

**Separates the hour and the minute in a written time construction.**

- *11:47*

**Separates the chapter and verse in Biblical citations.**

- *Proverbs 3:5*

## Comma Splices

A comma splice is a common error occurring when a comma is used between two complete, often related, sentences. A semi-colon can fix this problem.

*I don't like being sick during September, it is hard to catch up on schoolwork so early in the year.*

*I don't like being sick during September; it is hard to catch up on schoolwork so early in the year.*