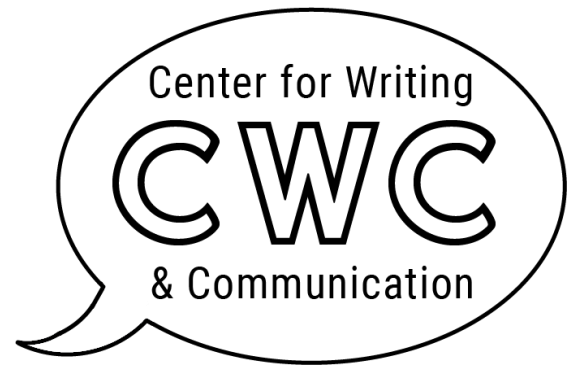


Controlling Colon and Semicolon Use



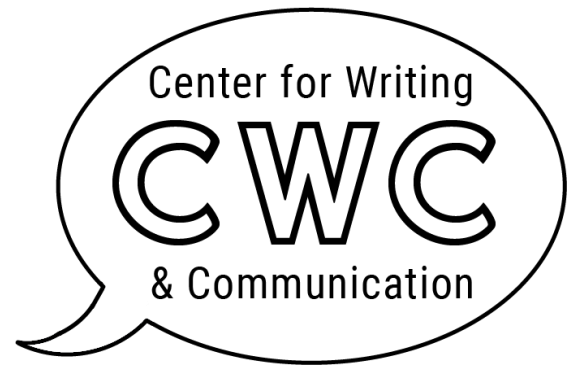
THE SEMICOLON:

- * Most often used to separate two independent clauses.
- * Strengthens the relationship between the two clauses more than a period.
- * Helps vary sentence structure and length.
- * **DO NOT** use a semicolon if the second clause begins with a conjunction (but, nor, and, etc.).
- * If the second clause uses introductory words (nevertheless, therefore, however, etc.) a semicolon may be appropriate.
- * Semicolons help you avoid comma splices.
 - * If two independent clauses are joined with only a comma, the relationship between them is very weak.
INCORRECT: I picked up my spoon, I ate my soup.
CORRECT: I picked up my spoon; I ate my soup.
 - * Only use a comma between independent clauses if they are a part of a list.
I ate my soup, I leaned back, and I was fully satisfied.
- * Using a semicolon as a *super comma*:
 - * If a list's items have commas within them, placing a comma there and also to separate the listed items can get confusing fast.
 - * Using a semicolon in between the listed items visually breaks up the list and helps the reader identify what is a part of the list and where it begins and ends.
CONFUSING: Henry had visited Hopeulikit, Georgia, Pomonkey, Maryland, and Imalone, Wisconsin before he made it home.
CLARIFIED: Henry had visited Hopeulikit, Georgia; Pomonkey, Maryland; and Imalone, Wisconsin before he made it home.

THE COLON:

- * Used to introduce something (one thing, an idea, a quote, or a list).
- * Adds emphasis to what is being introduced.
PLAIN: Henry was only interested in traveling.
EMPHASIS: Henry was only interested in one thing: traveling.

Controlling Colon and Semicolon Use



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- * Mentally adding “namely” before what is being introduced can be a good indicator if a colon is appropriate.
 - ONE WORD:** Henry only had one true hobby: traveling.
 - A LIST:** Henry had three favorite hobbies: traveling, photography, and painting.
 - A PHRASE:** Henry only had one true hobby: traveling the world.
 - A SENTENCE:** Henry only wanted to do one thing: he wanted to travel the world.
 - * **DO NOT** use a colon after a verb; the verb itself introduces whatever follows.
 - * Adding “namely” after a verb would not make sense, so neither would a colon.