

## Semicolon

Semicolons, like commas, indicate a pause, though a little bit longer. A pause stronger than a comma but is lesser when compared to a period.

The primary purpose of a semicolon is to connect two closely related ideas and clauses without the need of a conjunction, making your writing look more sophisticated.

For beginners, choosing between a colon and semicolon might be confusing. Here's why we are providing you this list of rules to help you gain more confidence when using it.

- Semicolons for closely related independent clauses

When ideas are combined using a semicolon, these ideas become of equal value.

Examples:

1. Some people like to use Windows computers; others like to use Apple.
2. John went to take a shower; Jimmy went outside to buy pizza.
3. I ordered hamburgers for our snack; it is nice to have fast food once in a while.
4. We have paid all our bills; we expect a good service from our house complex management.

- Semicolons replace conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs

Aside from semicolons, conjunctions link two closely related ideas too. However, if the former is used, the latter needs not to be written anymore.

Examples:

1. I saw some people wearing red shirts in the restaurant, and they were all eating the same food.

*I saw some people wearing red shirts in the restaurant; they were all eating the same food.*

2. His friend got into trouble, so his mum was furious.

*His friend got into trouble; his mum was furious.*

3. The company advertised new products, and customers are going crazy over them.

*The company advertised new products; customers are going crazy over them.*

4. I like to own a few pets, and I am hoping my friends will give me some.

*I like to own a few pets; I am hoping my friends will give me some.*

For conjunctive adverbs or transition words

1. A heinous crime happened near my city; *hence*, all police officers are on full alert.
2. He accidentally broke the expensive glass; *as a result*, his phone was confiscated.
3. The family went to Bali; moreover, they rented a private villa near a beach.
4. His experiments failed; hence, he was worried about his scholarship status.

- Semicolons for a clear long list

When a series contains commas, a semicolon helps it become clearer.

Examples:

1. My friend likes to buy lots of stuff: a red shirt, the one from Zara's limited edition; jeans, the newly released collection from True Religion; and a perfume, without the hint of any alcohol.
2. Jonathan, Jusa, & Levi, 2005; Cleve, 2009; Harris & Corrin, 2011; Diss & Kol, 2005; Heyman, 2008; Howard & Legare, in press; Kipling & Heyman, 2005. (*for citations and references*)
3. There are so many things I like: Fruits; Rose, Sunflower, and Tulips; Trendy jeans; iPhone, Apple computer, and earpods (apple products); and a gold necklace.
4. My school has different departments: English; Chemistry, Physics and Combined Science (Science Department); Arts; and Foreign Languages.

- Semicolons don't capitalize the first letter of the word

When using a semicolon, the first letter following it needs not to be capitalized.

Example:

1. I am here; He is there. (incorrect)  
I am here; he is there. (correct)
2. My friends are noisy; The teacher is late. (incorrect)  
*My friends are noisy; the teacher is late.* (correct)
3. I received a gift today; It's my birthday. (incorrect)  
*I received a gift today; it's my birthday.* (correct)
4. I have an appointment tomorrow; I can't go out tonight. (incorrect)  
*I have an appointment tomorrow; I can't go out tonight.* (correct)

## EXERCISES

- Semicolons for closely related independent clauses

When ideas are combined using a semicolon, these ideas become of equal value.

Determine whether the sentences below have properly placed a comma or now. Write YES or NO. Fix the sentence if NO.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ George Orwell wrote an essay called “Shooting an Elephant”; about where he is reluctant to shoot it.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I made my first trip to Asia in September; it was exciting and memorable.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ His presence made us feel nervous; and he was looking at us sharply.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ He got a warning from his supervisor; he broke the glass window.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I’m pretty sure I got a good report; the test was not that difficult.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ His company became successful; because of good administration.

- Semicolons replace conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs

Aside from semicolons, conjunctions link two closely related ideas too. However, if the former is used, the latter needs not to be written anymore.

Two sentences are given below. Combine them using a semicolon. You can add transition words for more emphasis. Answers may vary.

1. It is raining outside. I did not bring my umbrella.
2. The chef’s specialty is roasted chicken. It is not on the menu today.
3. He asked a difficult question. I am not going to answer it.
4. His case was dismissed. His face looks guilty.
5. Be careful when driving. You will be glad one day.
6. He achieved an outstanding report. He got a promotion.

- Semicolons for a clear long list

When a series contains commas, a semicolon helps it become clearer.

Place the semicolon to the following sentences:

1. His company's earnings in 2007 was 4,000,000 in 2008 it was 3,789,900 in 2011 it was 500,678,564 and in 2015 it was 500,000,000.
2. James bought his friend several presents: a mini fan, one of the trends in Hong Kong a luggage tag, a sought-after souvenir in Mongkok and a tote bag, with the Hong Kong Disneyland logo.
3. Tan, David, & Mie, 2004 Clair, 2008; Chris & Adam, 2005; Belle & Marie, 2006 Heinz, 2009; Harold & Joy, in press Andrew & Java, 2010. (*for citations and references*)
4. My parents would like to donate a few things: Toys car, dolls, planes books; accounting, language, chemistry stationeries; papers, pens, and pencils.
5. The university where I will study has lots of subjects in different departments: English, Mandarin, German, & Spanish (Languages department) Sociology, History, Psychology & Public Law (Liberal Arts department) Chemistry, Physics and Combined Science (Science Department).
6. I will buy dozens of chocolates: Hazelnut chocolate, the newly released product of Ferrero Rocher Sea salt and caramel truffle, the best selling product of Lindt & Sprüngli and York Peppermint Patties, a delightful treat from Hershey's.

- Semicolons don't capitalize the first letter of the word

When using a semicolon, the first letter following it needs not to be capitalized.

Rewrite the following sentences to correct their structure. Punctuate and capitalize words that require them.

1. He cleans the floor every morning; i do the laundry every Saturday.
2. He failed the class, He missed most of the classes.
3. My friends broke the window, They played basketball inside the class.
4. Jane's parents will visit his brother at the university: It's his graduation next week.
5. It might rain: i asked my mum to pick me up.
6. He asked me to accompany him: i have a prior commitment.

## ANSWER KEY

- Semicolons for closely related independent clauses

When ideas are combined using a semicolon, these ideas become of equal value.

Determine whether the sentences below have properly placed a comma or now. Write YES or NO. Fix the sentence if NO.

## ANSWERS:

1. *NO* George Orwell wrote an essay called “Shooting an Elephant” about where he is reluctant to shoot it.
2. *YES*
3. *NO* His presence made us feel nervous; he was looking at us sharply.
4. *YES*
5. *YES*
6. *NO* His company became successful because of good administration.

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Two sentences are given below. Combine them using a semicolon. You can add transition words for more emphasis. Answers may vary.

## ANSWERS:

1. *It is raining outside; however, I did not bring my umbrella.*
2. *The chef’s specialty is roasted chicken; however, it is not on the menu today.*
3. *He asked a difficult question; in other words, I am not going to answer it.*
4. *His case was dismissed; however, his face looks guilty.*
5. *Be careful when driving; you will be glad one day.*
6. *He achieved an outstanding report; hence, he got a promotion.*

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