

## Punctuation:

### Using colons (:) and semi-colons(;

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#### Colons ( : )

Colons alert the reader to the information that follows and are used to

- **Introduce a list that comes at the end of a sentence**

Eg. I looked at my father in a new way over the holidays. I noticed several things: his compassion, his sense of humour and his outgoing personality.

Eg. A good cop should possess the following traits: honesty, patience, strength and courage.

*However, the part of the sentence before the colon has to be a clause that can stand by itself. Note that the colon is in the wrong place in the next example as 'A good cop should' does not make sense on its own.*

Eg. A good cop should: possess the following traits, honesty, patience, strength and courage.

- **Indicate a ratio**

Eg. 1:30.

- **Separate hours and minutes**

Eg. 8:56 am.

- **Introduce a word or group of words (phrase or clause) that add particular emphasis to the meaning of the sentence.**

Eg. They needed one more thing to pass Law: 80% in the final exam.

- **To separate the place of publication from the publisher in a list of references**

Eg. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

## Semi-colons (;)

A semi-colon is, as it looks, midway between of a comma and a full stop. It is weaker than a full stop and stronger than a comma. Semi-colons

- **Join two closely related sentences**

Eg. I grew up wanting to become an actor; I wanted to become the best.

*Note: When joining two sentences with a transitional word such as however, moreover, nevertheless, then or therefore, add a semi-colon before the word and a comma after it.*

Eg. The boy had been missing for several days; however, he was found unharmed.

- **Separate clauses which already contain commas**

Eg. Nursing is a commitment, not an occupation; a calling, not a job; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your mind.

*Without semi colons to distinguish each person's role, the following sentence implies that five or six people were chosen to be on a panel.*

Eg. We invited Katrina, the new director, Gillian, the investigator, and David, the psychologist, to be on the panel.

*To avoid ambiguity, the sentence correctly reads*

Eg. We invited Katrina, the new director; Gillian, the investigator; and David, the psychologist; to be on the panel.

- **Separate lists which already contain commas**

Eg. Executive Director, Management Services; Executive Director, Human Resources and Development...

Adapted from  
Jakob, K. (1991). *A guide to police writing*. Canada: Carswell.

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