

# FOUNDATIONAL GRAMMAR

## LESSON THIRTEEN: COLONS and SEMICOLONS

### **Colons**

Colons tend to be less used than other types of punctuation; however, knowing how to use them will be valuable to you.

Colons look like this : and they should be used according to the rules below.

### **3 Main Uses**

1) Use a colon before listed items that are explicitly introduced by such words as “the following”, “as follows”, “thus”, and “these”.

Eg:

I need the following from the store: eggs, butter, apples, juice, and grass.

You must practice these virtues: patience, humility, and obedience!

2) Use a colon to separate two complete sentences when the second sentence explains, amplifies, or illustrates the first.

Eg:

I want you to read this book: it is the most marvelous example of perfect prose.

John ate four peanut butter sandwiches: he has always loved peanut butter dearly.

3) Use a colon to introduce a long quotation.

Eg:

Winston Churchill said many wise things, such as: “Politics is the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month and next year. And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn’t happen.”

### **3 Lesser Uses**

4) After the introduction in a business letter.

Eg:

Dear Dr. Pearce:

5) Colons should separate chapter and verse in a Bible selection and when writing the time.

Eg:

John 3:16

It is 10:00 at night.

6) Colons should be placed between the title and subtitle of a book.

Eg:

*Maverick: The Story of a Talking Moose*

## **Semicolons**

Semicolons are another type of very useful punctuation marks that can help us with our sentences!

A semicolon looks like this ; and it has three main uses:

1) A semicolon should be used between two closely related independent clauses (complete sentences) which are not joined by a coordinating conjunction

Eg:

I went to the bridal boutique; I was hoping to choose a wedding dress.

We went to the restaurant; it was full.

I like peanut butter; Jill prefers jelly.

What are some other examples of independent clauses that you could join with a semicolon like this?

2) A semicolon should be used before a joining word or explanatory phrase in a compound sentence.

Examples of these words and phrases are: *for example, namely, on the contrary, in fact, that is, on the other hand, therefore, nevertheless, moreover, consequently, furthermore, besides, then, thus, instead, accordingly, otherwise, so, yet, still, hence, however.*

Eg:

You think I am very weak; on the contrary, I am very strong.

I like traveling; thus, I am going to Africa.

3) A semicolon should come between items in a list which has internal punctuation. Commas already exist within the items on the list, doing some other job, as in “Montreal, Quebec” Cities and their state/province/country always have a comma between them.) Using even more commas to mark out the different items in the list would be a mess of commas, so we use a semicolon to do that job of splitting up items on a list instead.

Eg:

I want to visit Montreal, Quebec; Victoria, British Columbia; and Split, Croatia.

I would like a dozen roses, ones which are red; the most massive, yummy box of chocolates ever; and a new car, preferably an Audi.

They are especially common in lists that come after colons.

Eg:

I would like many things: a new bike; a doll that cries; a blue coat; and a red ball.

### **Back to sentences...**

Now that we have learned a few useful punctuation marks to help us in correcting sentences, let's get back to discussing sentences.

**Remember: a sentence = a subject + verb. It must also form a complete thought.**

A sentence is also called an independent clause, because it can stand alone, independently of anything else, as a complete idea.

### **Review: Sentence Fragments**

As you already know, a fragment is an incomplete sentence. This can mean it is missing a subject, a verb, and sometimes both.

Sometimes, though, you can have a dependent clause [it is dependent on something else (the independent clause) for it to make sense]. This means that you have both a subject and a verb, but not a complete idea.

eg:

Because she was so sad.

When you finally get that puppy.

As you can see, all of these clauses have a subject and a verb, but they are not complete thoughts.

She ate an entire cake, because she was so sad.

I think you will be happy when you finally get that puppy.

\*So dependent clauses without their independent clause would be considered **fragments** even though they have a subject and a verb. They are lacking in being a complete idea.

**Refresh: Subordinating Conjunctions that make clauses “dependent/subordinate”**

Cause / Effect: because, since, so that

Comparison / Contrast: although, even though, though, whereas, while

Place & Manner: how, however, where, wherever

Possibility / Conditions: if, whether, unless

Relation: that, which, who

Time: after, as, before, since, when, whenever, while, until