

## I. Colons

### 1. To set up a list.

Ex: I have four favorite presidents: Washington, Lincoln, and both Roosevelts.

Remember that what comes before the colon needs to be a complete thought. That is, it should be able to stand on its own.

(an independent clause)

### 2. To explain what has just been said.

Ex: The teacher was to the point: he wouldn't tolerate any misbehavior.

### 3. To emphasize an item at the end of a sentence.

Ex: He knew exactly who was responsible for this mess: his students.

### 4. To separate hours and minutes in time.

Ex: The time is 12:01 a.m.

### 5. To introduce a quote when leading in with an independent clause.

Ex: Winter is a very cold season, as explained by John Smith in his book: "insert quote" (#).

Note: DO NOT use a colon when you use a linking verb to introduce a list (ex. "are" "such as" "including")

Example: My favorite four presidents are Washington, Lincoln, and both Roosevelts.

## II. Semicolons

### 1. To join together two complete thoughts (also known as independent clauses) instead of using a comma and conjunction.

Ex: I practiced for three hours, and now I am ready.

Ex: I practiced for three hours; now I am ready.

You CANNOT use a semicolon if the two clauses are unrelated, such as in this sentence: "I practiced for three hours; we have a cat." Unless you practiced because of the cat, this is not a good use of the semicolon.

(conjunctive adverb)

You can also use a semicolon when one of the clauses begins with an adverb like *however*, *consequently*, *besides*, *moreover*, *furthermore*, etc. For example:

Ex: I played my best last night; however, I still need more practice.

Ex: I have allergies; consequently, I go through a box of Kleenex a week.

### 2. To separate items in a list when there is a comma overload.

Ex: I play the trumpet, drums, and clarinet; and she plays the piano and flute.

Ex: She went to the farmer's market and bought cauliflower, which was cut in pieces; sweet corn, which was already husked; and tomatoes, both red and green, which she enjoys eating raw.

\*To create a proper dash on your computer: press “option”, then “shift”, then the hyphen button to the right of the zero button, or sometimes pressing the hyphen button twice will automatically create the dash.

### III. Dashes

**Dashes** separate information that a writer or speaker is trying to emphasize. Often, the information repeats or clarifies what has already been said. Even if the information set off by the dashes is removed, the sentence still makes sense. Think of them as supercommas.

#### 1. To set off information that explains what has just been said.

Ex: Those two presidents were the best we ever had.  
Ex: Those two presidents—Washington and Lincoln—were the best we ever had.

\*Notice that there are no spaces around the dashes.

Ex: I think we should see a movie tonight.  
Ex: I think we should see a movie tonight--Vampires Suck looks good.

#### 2. To show an interruption.

Ex: “Can you pass the—?” The phone rang.

### IV. Hyphens

**Hyphens** are not dashes. Where a dash is long ( — ) and helps to separate information, a hyphen is shorter ( - ) and helps bring information together. There are six times when you will probably use a hyphen, and you already know most of them.

#### 1. To make compound words.

Example: I visited my great-grand-aunt yesterday.  
Example: She was taller than me-on-my-tiptoes tall.

\*Notice that there are no spaces before or after the hyphen.

#### 2. To join words and letters, like in the rating of a movie.

Example: I would have seen the movie if it wasn't R-rated.

#### 3. Between numbers and fractions.

Example: I am twenty-four years old.  
Example: That recipe requires one-tenth cup of baking soda.

#### 4. When using prefixes (self-, ex-, half-, re-, etc.).

Example: The ex-president won the Nobel Peace Prize.  
Example: The self-service gas pump is broken.  
Example: Please re-type the essay for tomorrow.

#### 5. In numbers, such as phone numbers or when writing a range.

Example: My favorite song is “867-5309 (Jenny).”  
Example: The American Civil War lasted from 1861-1865.

#### 6. To form a compound adjective BEFORE a noun.

Example: “I spoke to the woman with long hair” becomes “I spoke to the long-haired woman.”

compound adjective      noun  
↓                                      ↓