

; Using Semicolons ;

Semicolons help you connect closely related ideas when a style mark stronger than a comma is needed. By using semicolons effectively, you can make your writing sound more sophisticated.

Connect closely related ideas

- Link two independent clauses to connect closely related ideas Some people write with a word processor; others write with a pen or pencil.

EXAMPLE: Soham wears glasses; Soham is near-sighted.

- Link clauses connected by conjunctive adverbs or transitional phrases to connect closely related ideas But however they choose to write, people are allowed to make their own decisions; as a result, many people swear by their writing methods.

EXAMPLE: Aditya plays cricket; as a result, he owns many paddles.

- Link lists where the items contain commas to avoid confusion between list items There are basically two ways to write: with a pen or pencil, which is inexpensive and easily accessible; or by computer and printer, which is more expensive but quick and neat.

EXAMPLE: Vanessa enjoys many activities: She likes pole vaulting, which is cool; and she likes driving with her feet out the window, which is dangerous.

- Link lengthy clauses or clauses with commas to avoid confusion between clauses Some people write with a word processor, typewriter, or a computer; but others, for different reasons, choose to write with a pen or pencil.

EXAMPLE: Some people read fantasy, science fiction, and horror; but others, for different reasons, choose to read romance or mystery.

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Rules for Using Semicolons

- A semicolon is most commonly used to link (in a single sentence) two independent clauses that are closely related in thought. When a semicolon is used to join two or more ideas (parts) in a sentence, those ideas are then given equal position or rank. Some people write with a word processor; others write with a pen or pencil.
- Use a semicolon between two independent clauses that are connected by conjunctive adverbs or transitional phrases. But however they choose to write, people are allowed to make their own decisions; as a result, many people swear by their writing methods.
- Use a semicolon between items in a list or series if any of the items contain commas. There are basically two ways to write: with a pen or pencil, which is inexpensive and easily accessible; or by computer and printer, which is more expensive but quick and neat.
- Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction if the clauses are already punctuated with commas or if the clauses are lengthy. Some people write with a word processor, typewriter, or a computer; but others, for different reasons, choose to write with a pen or pencil.

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Avoid using a comma when a semicolon is needed:

Incorrect: The cow is brown, it is also old.

Correct: The cow is brown; it is also old.

What's going on here? Both parts of the sentence are independent clauses, and commas should **not** be used to connect independent clauses if there is no coordinating conjunction. This mistake is known as a **comma splice**.

Incorrect: I like cows, however, I hate the way they smell.

Correct: I like cows; however, I hate the way they smell.

What's going on here? The conjunctive adverb **however** signals a connection between two independent clauses, and commas should **not** be used to connect independent clauses if there is no coordinating conjunction.

Incorrect: I like cows: they give us milk, which tastes good, they give us beef, which also tastes good, and they give us leather, which is used for shoes and coats.

Correct: I like cows: they give us milk, which tastes good; they give us beef, which also tastes good; and they give us leather, which is used for shoes and coats.

What's going on here? It's unclear what the three list items are, since the items are separated by commas.

Incorrect: Cows, though their bovine majesty has been on the wane in recent millenia, are still one of the great species of this planet, domesticated, yet proud, they ruminate silently as we humans pass tumultuously by.

Correct: Cows, though their bovine majesty has been on the wane in recent millenia, are still one of the great species of this planet; domesticated, yet proud, they ruminate silently as we humans pass tumultuously by.

What's going on here? It's unclear where the first independent clause ends and the second independent clause begins.

Avoid using a semicolon when a comma is needed:

Incorrect: Because cows smell; they offend me.

Correct: Because cows smell, they offend me.

What's going on here? The first part is not an independent clause, so no semicolon is required.

<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Semicolons.html>

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USEFUL TERMINOLOGY related to semi-colon usage:

Independent clause

An *independent clause* contains a **subject** and a **predicate**, and it either stands alone or could stand alone.

Examples of independent clauses:

- The cow is brown.
- Bovines are delectable.
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BUT NOT:

- When the cow gets old
- If the cow eats hay

MORE EXAMPLES:

Yes: Soham wears glasses.

No: When Soham wears glasses

Yes: When Soham wears glasses, he can see.

Conjunctive adverbs

Conjunctive adverbs (or sentence adverbs) indicate a connection between 2 independent clauses in one sentence. Or they may link the ideas in 2 or more sentences. Or they may show relationships between ideas within an independent clause.

English has many *conjunctive adverbs*, including: also, however, otherwise, consequently, indeed, similarly, finally, likewise, then, furthermore, moreover, therefore, hence, nevertheless, thus, nonetheless.

Transitional phrases

English offers innumerable *transitional phrases*; the linkages they provide allow your reader to follow the progression of your argument or ideas more easily.

Some *transitional phrases* include: in addition, in contrast, in the meantime, more importantly, for example, in the same way, on the contrary, on the other hand, that is to say, to summarize, by all means, of course, in fact.

Coordinating conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions — and, but, or, nor, so, yet — join grammatically similar elements (two nouns, two verbs, two modifiers, two independent clauses). These conjunctions indicate that the elements joined are equal in importance and in structure.