



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

The Writing Center Presents:

Semicolon vs. Colon...And
What *is* a Comma Splice?



Colons

- As a sentence connector, the colon is rather specialized.
- Unlike the semicolon, which connects sentences with the meaning of and, the colon makes an announcement of sorts.
- The colon signals an appositive or a list

Semicolon

- Use a semicolon between the clauses of a compound sentence when a conjunctive adverb (such as nonetheless, however, therefore) or an adverbial phrase (such as in that case, as a result, on the other hand) introduces the second clause
 - EX: The issues were difficult to sort out; however, the judges had to make a decision.
 - The contract negotiations lasted for two years; as a result, many workers quit their jobs and found other ones.

Semicolon cont...

- Use a semicolon between independent clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction:
 - EX: There's a difference between the music of Back and Mozart; it is a difference worth discovering (361).

Semicolon cont...

- Use a semicolon between clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction if one or both of the clauses includes commas:
 - During the Italian Renaissance the inside of the pomegranate, which is divided into compartment containing colorful seeds, was the basis for a popular fabric design; and in the Middle East this beautiful fruit figured prominently in the decorative arts (361).

Semicolon cont...

- Use a colon between the clauses of a compound sentence when the second clause explains or amplifies the first clause.
 - EX: After reading the letter, he did something that surprised me: He laughed and tore it up.
 - EX: My uncle was not wasteful: he was uncommonly thrifty..

When to Use Commas

- To separate three or more items in a series or list:
 - EX: Tacos, cheeseburgers, and low-carb salads are the most popular foods served in the cafeteria (362).

When to Use Commas

- You may use a comma with compound elements when the conjunction is but:
 - *I love mangos and peaches, but not apricots*
- You may also use a comma to give special emphasis to the second element in a compound:
 - *The judge listened to our side of the story, and then ruled against us.*

When to Use Commas

- Use commas to set off phrases or clauses that merely comment on the nouns they modify, rather than defining or restricting their meaning.
- Use commas to set off transitional phrases and parenthetical comments that interrupt the flow of the sentence:
 - *Honesty, in my opinion, should always be tempered with kindness.*

When to Use Commas

- Use commas to set off nouns of direct address:
 - The fact is, my friends, we have no choice in this matter.
 - Mr. Ortiz, can you send us a copy of the accident report?

When to Use Commas

- Use a comma to set off the reporting tag (e.g., she said, he replied, Darwin observed) from a different quotation:
 - *“No one can make you feel inferior,” Eleanor Roosevelt said, “without your consent.”*

When to Use Commas...

- Put a comma after introductory structures such as:
 - A long prepositional phrase
 - A single-word sentence modifier
 - Adverbial clause or verb phrase
 - Absolute phrase
 - Participial phrase

Comma Splices

- A Comma Splice occurs when the comma is used without the conjunction and produces a nonconventional connection (361).
- A comma splice occurs when you use a comma to join two complete sentences without placing an appropriate joining word between them.
- The comma just isn't strong enough to do the job of making one grammatical sentence out of two.

All Information Obtained From:

- Kolln, Martha. Understanding English grammar. New York: Pearson Education, 2006.
- University College Writing Center. University of Toronto. Web.

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