

Semicolons vs Colons

Semicolons

Semicolons are used to separate different elements in a sentence. Similarly to periods, it often marks the end of a clause (sentence part that has both a subject and a verb). It also symbolizes that what is to follow, is related to what came before it. You may often discover that semicolons are used in place of the word 'and' in a sentence, as well as the commonly used comma (.). A semicolon is also often used prior to the phrase 'for example' or 'that is', in a sentence. Lastly, and possibly the most common use of a semicolon would be to separate phrases or items in a list or series.



Semicolon Examples:

Separating Independent Clauses:

Lettuce was Stewart the Hamsters favorite; the crunch drew him to the kitchen.

Second Clause Introduced by 'for example' or 'that is':

Stewart did not appreciate his owner taking away his lettuce; indeed, he at one point responded to the appearance of his owner by biting his finger.

Separating Items In a List:

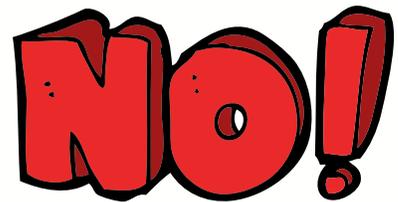
Stewart set out to explain to Max why lettuce was the best vegetable on the planet. Lettuce is crunchy, cold, and delicious; allowing the mouth watering, nutritious value that Stewart adored; and be suitable for any meal, breakfast or dessert.

Semicolon DO NOT's:

Avoid: Using a semicolon when the dependent clause comes before the independent clause

Avoid: Using a semicolon when your independent clauses are not related

Avoid: Using a semicolon to separate units of a list that contain commas



Semicolons vs Colons

Colons

Colons are used typically as a mark of introduction. They are used to let the reader know that what follows the colon has been described previously. Colons introduce clauses and phrases, descriptions, quotes, and lists for example. Capital letters are not required after the use of a colon, but if you do chose to capitalize them, be consistent with capitalization throughout the duration of the paper. Colons can also introduce an appositive (noun or noun phrase that refers to the same thing as a noun or noun phrase in the same sentence).

Colons Examples:

Introducing Clauses and Phrases:

Stewart the Hamster and Max the Dog were having a passionate argument about lettuce: is lettuce meant for Hamsters or Dogs?

Introducing an Appositive:

"Max", said Stewart, "lettuce is meant for one animal: Hamsters".
(the noun, lettuce, is an apposition to the "one thing" noun phrase on the other side of the colon)

Introducing a List:

Stewart was not about to abandon his position. If Stewart was going to insist that lettuce was meant for Hamsters, he was going to claim that it was meant for everyone of his breed: big, small, and cute.

Colons DO NOT's:

Avoid: Separating a subject from its predicate.

Avoid: Separating a noun from its verb

Avoid: Separating a verb from its object or complement

Avoid: Separating a preposition from its object

