

Colons and Semicolons

Semicolons...

1. *Complete sentence; complete sentence.*

Connect complete sentences that are closely related.

Strawberry French toast is my favorite breakfast food; I would eat it every day if that were possible.

2. *... includes a comma; list item 2, which may also include a comma; and list item 3, which may also include a comma.*

Separate items in a list when any individual list items contain a comma.

Welcoming customers to the Pancake Cafe were Edna, the new head waitress; Sam, the host; Josie, the cashier; and Larry, a regular customer.

Common mistake Using a semicolon to join a complete sentence to an incomplete sentence.

Incorrect. Since the diner was packed with waiting customers [incomplete sent.]; Edna handed out free cups of coffee to keep everyone happy [complete sent.].

Correct. The diner was packed with waiting customers [complete sent.]; Edna handed out free cups of coffee to keep everyone happy [complete sent.].

Colons...

1. *Complete sentence: list of items or elaboration.*

comes after the colon may be either a complete sentence or an incomplete sentence.

We still need the following ingredients for a smoothie: blueberries, yogurt, and pineapple.

2. Follow the salutation of a business letter.

Dear Mr. Bacon:

3. Join titles to subtitles.

Mmm Breakfast: Why Bacon Makes Life Better

- 4.

ordering drove Edn

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Common mistake Using a colon after an incomplete sentence.

Incorrect

Correct

Tip

place. If *namely* makes sense when you re-read the sentence, a colon will work.

There was one obvious place to meet, *namely*, the pancake house.

There was one obvious place to meet: the pancake house.

namely in its