



SEMICOLONS, COLONS & DASHES

Semicolons are used for only two purposes:

1. To join two complete and related sentences

My mom is fanatical about Ohio State; our house is painted scarlet and gray.

2. To join items in a list to avoid confusion when one or more of the items uses a comma

Our company has locations in Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Atlanta, Georgia; and Norwalk, Connecticut.

Colons are used to introduce more specific information within a sentence. This commonly happens in three ways:

1. Introducing a series

For lunch today, you may choose three of the following items: chicken salad sandwich, yogurt, fruit cup, Caesar salad, or chocolate pudding.

2. Introducing a formal quotation

During the Renaissance, the English mistrusted Italian influence so much that they had a proverb about it: "An Italianate Englishman is the devil incarnate."

3. Introducing a word or phrase that clarifies or complements what comes before the colon

Every day for my entire first-grade year I watched the same movie: Walt Disney's Sleeping Beauty.

I had accomplished something that made me very proud: I had completed my college career without ever missing a single Buckeye football game.

*** A colon should be preceded by a complete sentence. ***

Dashes indicate a sharp break in the continuity of the sentence. When you are typing dashes, type them using two hyphens with no spaces before, between, or after:

Stay away from there--you could hurt yourself!

Microsoft Word automatically converts the two hyphens (--) to a dash (—) after you type the next word.

Use dashes in the following situations:

1. Setting off information that interrupts the sentence's train of thought

The Daily Show—first hosted by Craig Kilborn from 1996-98—rose to new prominence with its "Indecision 2000" coverage of the 2000 presidential election.

2. Following an introductory phrase or series of ideas

Soft, luxurious, and cozily warm—our cashmere sweaters wrap you in elegance. I couldn't believe it—the sample sentences were so cheesy!

