

1 Here's the Idea

A **semicolon (;)** separates elements in a sentence. It indicates a more definite break than a comma. A **colon (:)** is used after a word introducing a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series.

Semicolons

- ▶ **Use a semicolon to join the independent clauses of a compound sentence in which no coordinating conjunction is used.** Coordinating conjunctions are *and, but, for, nor, or, so,* and *yet*.

independent clause ; independent clause

The Magna Carta protected citizens from royal abuses of power ; the Bill of Rights protects citizens from federal abuse of power

- ▶ **Use a semicolon between independent clauses that are joined by a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase.**

CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB

The Constitution prohibits “unreasonable searches” ; **however,** the courts need to decide what’s “unreasonable.”

TRANSITIONAL PHRASE

Free speech is a complex issue ; **for example,** should conversations in Internet chat rooms be considered private or public?

Common Conjunctive Adverbs and Transitional Phrases

Conjunctive adverbs	finally, consequently, nevertheless, also, moreover, therefore, otherwise, however
Transitional phrases	as a result, for example, in fact, in other words, that is, for instance

Use a comma, not a semicolon, to separate a phrase or subordinate clause from an independent clause.

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

Although the Constitution has been amended many times , the Bill of Rights has never been amended .

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

► **Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by a conjunction if either clause contains commas.**

In 1896, the Supreme Court, in a seven-to-one vote, ruled that racial segregation was constitutional; but, on May 17, 1954, by a unanimous vote, the Supreme Court overturned that ruling.

► **Use a semicolon to separate items in a series if one or more of the items contain commas.**

These liberties are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights: freedom of speech, press, and religion, by the First Amendment; right to privacy, by the Fourth Amendment; and due process of law, by the Fifth Amendment.

Colons

► **Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of items.**

Among the notable Supreme Court justices are the following: **Warren Burger, William O. Douglas, Thurgood Marshall, and Sandra Day O'Connor.**

► **Use a colon between two independent clauses when the second explains or elaborates the first.**

Thurgood Marshall received valuable experience by working as legal counsel for the NAACP; he argued 32 civil-rights cases before the Supreme Court.

Do not use a colon directly after a verb.

Marshall believed the government should provide education, legal services, and access to the courts.

Here are some further rules for using colons.

• **Use a colon to introduce a long or formal quotation.**

The Eighth Amendment has the following wording: “Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.”

• **Use a colon after the salutation of a business letter.**

Dear Ms. Yamaguchi:

• **Use a colon between numerals indicating hours and minutes.**

At 12:01 P.M., the court adjourned for lunch.

• **Use a colon to separate numerals in references to certain religious works, such as the Bible, the Qur’an (Koran), and the Talmud.**

Solomon’s famous ruling is found in 1 Kings 3:16–28.