

Semicolons

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What is a semicolon?

Semicolons are helpful in clarifying the writer's intent if they do not distract the reader.

Semicolons can be used...

Between complete sentences and main clauses to replace a period if the sentences or clauses are related. (If words like *therefore* and *however* are used as interrupters only in the middle of a sentence, then do not use a semicolon.)

"Olivia needs to lower her voice; she is disrupting the class."

"His dog ate my shoe; therefore, he should replace it."

"I would, however, enjoy his company."

To separate items in a series when the units in the series contain commas.

"I visited my family in Cleveland, Ohio; Hershey, Pennsylvania; and Rochester, New York over break."

"She loves to take her breaks with Ross, the over-analyzer; John, the quiet listener; and Sam, the funny storyteller."

Things to remember...

It is potentially confusing to use a semicolon to introduce a list. It is more accepted to use a comma after the complete sentence and before a word that introduces the list. (If the list has less than three items, always use a comma.)

"You may want to bring your gear, namely, a map and a flashlight."

"You will need to carry all the items in your bag, e.g., phone, map, flashlight, and blanket."