Also, colons don't belong after "such as," "including," or "for example."

- Ex. I found some great finds at the thrift store, including: a record player, a dress from the '70s, and an old painting of a Maine Coon cat.

The Dash

A dash is placed before or after a word (or sometimes both) without a space in between. It can be used for emphasis and is a stylistic choice.

- Ex. One of my favorite foods—salty french fries—appeared on my plate.

A dash can also provide clarification for appositives that contain commas.

- Ex. The items that I bought at the farmer's market—a cactus, some almonds, and a trinket—were in my purse.
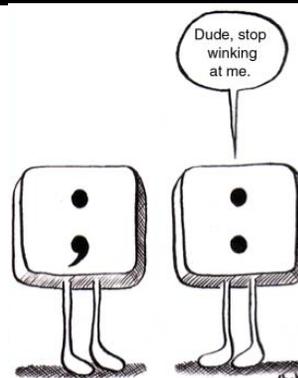
Some other reasons to use a dash are

- to introduce a list
- a restatement
- an amplification
- to express a sudden change in tone or thought

Ex. I completed my audition with confidence—but I didn't even make it to callbacks.

Ex. During the lecture, she just kept thinking about what she'd rather do—eat pizza and lay on the couch.
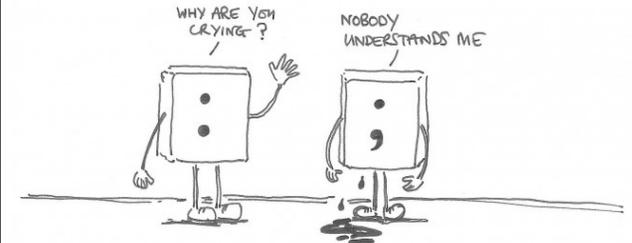
Resources

- A Writer's Reference (8th edition) by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers
- Purdue Online Writing Lab
- Grammar Girl website
- A Dash of Style by Noah Lukeman

Dude, stop winking at me.

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Colons, Semicolons and Dashes

(the misunderstood teenagers of punctuation)

WHY ARE YOU CRYING?

NOBODY UNDERSTANDS ME

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Gräwert, Helen. Cartoon. *Concise Content* 18 June 2013. Web.

The Semicolon

Many people avoid using the semicolon because they're unsure of its purpose. Others use it, but not in the correct way. If your semicolons are strictly reserved for the winky face emoticon in those flirty text messages, here are some basic guidelines for incorporating these often misunderstood punctuation marks into your next paper!

The semicolon is like a softer period. It creates a slight pause between two **independent clauses** that are closely related to each other to further connect them.

- Ex: Life is so hard as a semicolon**;** no one understands you.

A quick test to see if you're putting a semicolon in the right place is check that each clause on either side of the semicolon is a complete sentence. If they both are complete sentences, then you can use a semicolon.

You can also use a semicolon in a **list** to better distinguish pauses if the list is already punctuated with commas.

- Ex. Some great resources on campus are the writing center, which can help with citations, formatting, and organization**;** the learning center, which provides e-tutoring**;** and the library, which can help with researching.

How Not to Use Semicolons

Now that you know when to use a semicolon, it's important to know when you can't use one.

A semicolon should not go in between a **dependent clause** and the rest of a sentence. A dependent clause cannot stand on its own and is underlined in the next example.

- Ex. <u>Although I love cats</u>**;** I don't have room in my house for more than three.

A semicolon can't be placed between an appositive and what it's referring to. The appositive is underlined in the next example.

- Ex. Drake**;** <u>one of my favorite rappers</u>, is releasing his new album on April 29th, 2016.

Semicolons can't be placed between an independent clause and a **coordinating conjunction** (**f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r **y**et, **s**o aka **FANBOYS**)

- Ex. I am an English major**;** and that means I have to write a lot of papers.

The Colon

The colon is another commonly misused and misunderstood punctuation marker. Traditionally, it is used after an independent clause to draw attention to:

- ▸ a list

Ex. My favorite colors are great**:** purple, magenta, and fuchsia.

- ▸ an appositive

Ex. He took me to a fancy restaurant, but I still ordered my favorite meal**:** chicken fingers and fries.

- ▸ a quotation (after an independent clause)

Ex. My mother always had a reason for me not getting braces when I was younger**:** "Your smile makes you who you are."

- ▸ a summary or explanation

Ex. Finals week**:** a time for stressing, crying, and reevaluating your entire life.

Incorrect ways to use a colon include placing it between a verb and its object. The verb is <u>underlined</u> and the object is *italicized* in the next example.

Ex. I <u>play</u>: *the ukulele*.