Semi-Colons & Colons

Only use semi-colons and colons when you know exactly why you are using them.

**Semi-colon**
Connects two closely related, complete sentences.
- *Michael brought a shredder to work that day; he would not tolerate any more improper semi-colons.*

Separates listed items if the items themselves use commas.
- *Bridget compiled a list of the offenders, which included Alexa, a freshman; Cody, a junior; and Erika, a senior.*

**Colon**
Introduces a list at the end of a complete sentence.
- *In frustration, Harumy began to destroy the Writing Center: the chairs, the tables, and the beautifully painted walls.*

Introduces a quotation after a complete sentence.
- *Rosario and Xinjie began to scream: “Cease this destruction at once!”*

Introduces an answer (or an appositive).
- *Only one person could save the Writing Center now: Dr. Katherine Schmidt.*

Introduces a complete sentence that modifies a prior sentence.
- *Madalyn had a superpower: it was time control.*

Follows a salutation in a formal letter.
- *Dear Editors of the Oregonian:*

Separates the hour and the minute in a written time construction.
- *11:47*

Separates the chapter and verse in Biblical citations.
- *Proverbs 3:5*

Separates titles and subtitles.
- *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe’s Guide to Better English in Plain English*

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**Comma Splices**
A comma splice is a common error occurring when a comma is used between two complete, often related, sentences. A semi-colon can fix this problem.

*I don’t like being sick during September, it is hard to catch up on schoolwork so early in the year.*

*I don’t like being sick during September; it is hard to catch up on schoolwork so early in the year.*