**SEMICOLON & COLON**

The **semicolon** *does not* have the stopping power of the period in that it does not indicate as complete a stop; however, the semicolon is more powerful than the comma in that a comma *alone* cannot join two independent clauses (complete sentences). The next word after a semicolon should not be capitalized. To use only a comma to join independent clauses is to commit the fatal grammar error of the ***COMMA SPLICE****.* A comma splice occurs when a comma separates clauses that could each stand alone as a sentence.

**Consider the following example of a comma splice:**

The beautiful woman was impressed by the young man’s grammatical skills**,** she was equally amazed at his prowess with punctuation.

The *comma* does *not* have the power *by itself* to join two independent clauses, but the **SEMICOLON** does!

The beautiful woman was impressed by the young man’s grammatical skills**;** she was equally amazed at his prowess with punctuation.

**The SEMICOLON is also used to separate elements in a series of things when those elements contain their own punctuation. For example, analyze the following sentence:**

While traveling in Europe**,** we visited Madrid**,** Spain**;** London**,** England**;** Rome**,** Italy**;** Paris**,** France**;** and Lisbon**,** Portugal.

**Without the semicolons, cities are not clearly linked with their countries and the reader could become confused (especially a reader unfamiliar with European geography).** **Here’s another example:**

Anthropology encompasses archaeology**,** the study of ancient civilization through artifacts**;** linguistics**,** the study of the structure and development of language**;** and cultural anthropology**,** the study of language**,** customs**,** and behavior.

**Semicolons separate the individual disciplines and their focus, making the sentence clearer and easier to read.**

A COLON is used primarily to call attention to the words that follow. It is a signal to the reader that what follows gives more detailed information about what came before the colon. A colon is almost always used at the end of a complete sentence or where there is a stop. Avoid using the colon to interrupt the natural flow of a sentence.

**The COLON introduces a list or series:**

· Martin was making every kind of payment imaginable**:** alimony, child support, quarterly income tax, retirement, and even burial insurance.

· Ellen and I reached three decisions that afternoon**:** to get new jobs, to move out of her parents’ house, and to return to college.

**The colon introduces information that will clarify, amplify, or supplement:**

· Poems are like dreams**:** in them you put what you don't know you know. (Adrienne Rich)

· Friendship is like love**:** it cannot be forced.

· Don’t buy that car**:** it will break down a lot and be expensive to repair.

**In addition, the colon is used in a variety of special ways, some of which are listed here:**

· Between hours and minutes expressed in numerals: **11:15 a.m.**

· Between Biblical chapters and verses: **Matthew 25:34-45**

· Between a title and subtitle: ***George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art***

· Following a salutation in a formal letter: **Dear Mrs. Garcia:**

· In ratios expressed in numerals: **4:l** (four to one)

**The colon also introduces lengthy quotations (called *block quotes*):**

A quotation of more than four typed lines is set up as a block quote. The quotation should be introduced by a sentence followed by a colon. The introductory sentence tells the reader where the quotation is from and what it is about. The actual quotation begins on the next line, *without quotation marks.* Do not use quotation marks around the quotation. The colon and the indenting tell the reader that these are words taken directly from the source. Indent the quotation ten spaces from the paper’s left margin. The right margin for the quotation is the same as the paper's right margin. The line spacing of the quotation is the same as the spacing of the rest of the paper.