

Use Colons and Semi-Colons

There are two uses for semi-colons:

1. To separate multi-word items in a list.

Teachers say there are many successful techniques to help you remember important information, they are: use bright and colourful notes; use pictures and images for association; use pneumonics and acronyms; and regularly test yourself.

My lasagne is the best I use: fresh tomatoes; high quality mince; plenty of basil.

2. To place between clauses in a sentence to show that they are in some way linked.

Edward was searching in his bag; Prakash was smirking.

I did so much revision; I did well in my exam.

Have a go...

This piece of writing has had four semi-colons removed. Where would you put them?

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago — never mind how long precisely — having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off — then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.

*To check your answers read **Moby Dick** by Herman Melville. Chapter 1.*



There are two uses for colons:

1. To introduce a list.

My lasagne is the best I use: fresh tomatoes; high quality mince; plenty of basil.

For Christmas I got the following presents: books, money, clothes and a new phone.

2. To mean *that is to say...* or *and that is....*

There is one thing I hate about school dinners: you have to queue for so long (the colon replaces *and that is*).

I have just two words for you: go away (the colon replaces *and they are*)

Have a go...

Where would you put the colons in these sentences? **Ask your English teacher to check your answers for you when they can.**

- There are two choices at this time run away or fight.
- He wanted to see three cities in Italy Rome, Florence and Venice
- Remember Two can play at that game.
- She kept repeating “I really want that car!”
- Barry wanted to know why I didn’t respond to his text I hadn’t received it.
- You can come pick me up now I am feeling much better.
- Never forget this point Think before you speak.
- This house has everything I need two bedrooms, a garden and a garage.
- I have several favourite genres of movies drama, science fiction and mystery.
- This was first said by Shakespeare “To thine own self be true.”
- The world is a stage play your role well.
- The new boss has many nice traits friendly, outgoing and fair.
- These are my favourite colours purple, turquoise, pink and yellow.

For more testing to see if you have mastered the colon go to:

www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_43.htm