Semicolon and Colon Handout

Remember that an *independent clause* "a clause that can stand alone as a sentence, containing a subject and a predicate with a finite verb." An *independent clause* communicates a complete thought.

Common and Proper Uses of the Semicolon

- Use a semicolon to connect two independent clauses that are related to one another.

  - Example: The act of checking e-mail or refreshing the mini-feed on Facebook gives people's brains a jolt of dopamine; this is a reaction "researchers say can be addictive" (Richtel).

Common and Proper Uses of the Colon

- Use a colon when introducing a quotation after an independent clause. The quotation must also be an independent clause.

  - Example: Sociologist Matthew Brashears made a startling discovery: "Americans have fewer intimate relationships today than 20 years ago" (Hampton).

- Use a colon when introducing a list.

  - Example: Teens today are more distracted than ever by digital programs such as the following: e-mail, texts, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Grand Theft Auto.

- Use a colon between two independent clauses when the second clause provides more detail about or emphasizes the first clause.

  - Example: As a result, teens find it hard to look up from their phones because they need the feeling of getting a new e-mail or text: these teens become bored without the stimulation of digital media and that surge of dopamine (Richtel).

Further reference: The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL): http://owl.english.purdue.edu (search terms: semicolons and colons).