

Semicolon and Colon Handout

Remember that an *independent clause* is “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: They postponed plans to expand; they reduced production levels, laid off employees, or closed stores and offices altogether.

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: The newly homeless endured awful living conditions: “In larger cities, the homeless congregated in abandoned lots and constructed makeshift ‘homes’ of scrap wood” (Hayes).
- Use a colon when introducing a list.
 - Example: The men were all sent to do the following forestry work: digging ditches, building reservoirs, and planting trees.
- Use a colon between two independent clauses when the second clause provides more detail about or emphasizes the first clause.
 - Example: In addition to losing jobs, many Americans also lacked any savings to use during such an emergency: millions of people lost their entire life savings when banks collapsed (Hayes).

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