

USING COLONS & SEMICOLONS

ANSWER KEY

Practice
WORKSHEET

Please note: There is an element of discretion – there are various possible answers.

e.g. You need to bring clothes, sunscreen, snacks and a book on camp.

You need to bring the following on camp: clothes, sunscreen, snack and a book.

1. My father would always say that I should not trust politicians or lawyers.

My father would always say: "You should not trust politicians or lawyers."

2. Gerald doesn't like pizza, as he is allergic to cheese.

Gerald doesn't like pizza; he is allergic to cheese.

3. School was closed because the road was covered in ice.

School was closed: the road was covered in ice.

4. It takes courage, patience, determination and loyalty to be a teacher.

It takes the following qualities to be a teacher: courage, patience, determination and loyalty.

5. My sister loves to cook. However, she also loves to bake.

My sister loves to cook; however, she also loves to bake.

6. He was faced with the problem of not being good enough.

He was faced with a problem: he was not good enough.

7. The school is well known for its academic standards and great teaching.

The school is well known for two things: academic standards and great teaching.

8. I had passed my driving test and so my life had changed forever.

I had passed my driving test; my life had changed forever.

9. The beautiful sunset is the only thing I can see.

I can only see one thing: the beautiful sunset.

10. I could always hear her voice telling me not to give up.

I could always hear her voice: "Do not give up."

11. As the rain was pouring outside, we couldn't hear the phone.

The rain was pouring outside; we couldn't hear the phone.

12. I need to go to bed early, but my sister likes to stay up late.

I need to go to bed early; my sister likes to stay up late.

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Exercise One

For each of the following, fill in the missing colons or semicolons (choose the correct one):

1. You need to remember: give your all to everything you do.
2. The following students must report to the principal: Jim, Suzan, Vijay and Jo.
3. I always get up early; sunrises are just so beautiful.
4. She just kept repeating: "Don't you love me anymore?"
5. My head stopped spinning; the room came back into focus; I felt relieved.
6. The match was cancelled: the pitch was rain-soaked.
7. Neil loves cake; Robert loves biscuits.
8. You need many things to be a good cook: an abundance of patience; a love for experimentation; lots of creativity; and a good set of knives.
9. The manager had to make a decision: claim bankruptcy or undergo prosecution.
10. Call me on Friday; you can give me an answer then.

Exercise Two

Identify the correct sentence in each of the following:

a) James has an abundance of clothing; jackets, jeans, waistcoats, and shirts.

☒ b) James has an abundance of clothing: jackets, jeans, waistcoats, and shirts.

c) James has an abundance of clothing: jackets; jeans; waistcoats; and shirts.

a) Suzan likes coffee; but Bo likes tea.

b) Suzan likes coffee: Bo likes tea.

☒ c) Suzan likes coffee; Bo likes tea.

a) I hear my father's voice in my head; "Always think before you speak."

☒ b) I hear my father's voice in my head: "Always think before you speak."

c) I hear my father's voice in my head: "always think before you speak."

a) I have a problem; I am in love with two men.

☒ b) I have a problem: I am in love with two men.

c) I have a problem; as I am in love with two men.

a) The concert was cancelled: the weather was bad; I was devastated.

☒ b) The concert was cancelled; the weather was bad; I was devastated.

c) The concert was cancelled; the weather was bad: I was devastated.

☒ a) The kids experienced a feeling they had never felt before: excitement.

b) The kids experienced a feeling they had never felt before; excitement.

c) The kids experienced: a feeling they had never felt before; excitement.

USING SEMICOLONS

For each of the following sentences, identify whether semicolons have been used correctly or incorrectly and then explain your choice.

e.g. I know you don't like carrots; pizza is bad for your health.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: Here the semicolon is being incorrectly used as the two independent clauses are unrelated.

1. You need new brakes; otherwise you may have a car accident.

Identify: Correct Explain: Here the semicolon is used to separate two closely related independent clauses.

2. You need to bring the following items: hat; gloves; scarf; towel; and snacks.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: The items in this list are uncomplicated — they are single word items and so should be separated with commas.

3. Many teachers are here: Mr. Smith, History; Mrs. Jen, English; and Ms. Po, Math.

Identify: Correct Explain: Each item in this list contains a comma and so the semicolons are correctly used to separate them.

4. He is so dreamy; beautiful eyes, good skin and a great smile.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: The clause following the semicolon is not an independent clause, as it should be for correct usage.

5. So many options; I don't know what to choose on the menu.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: The clause preceding the semicolon is not an independent clause, as it should be for correct usage.

6. Jim loves tennis; and Sue loves basketball.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: The semicolon should not be used with a coordinating conjunction.

7. I passed the driving test; also, I won the magazine competition.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: These two clauses are unrelated and so should not be connected with a semicolon.

8. Bring a warm jacket with you; it gets cold at night.

Identify: Correct Explain: The colon correctly separates two related independent clauses.

USING COLONS

For each of the following sentences, identify whether colons have been used correctly or incorrectly and then explain your choice.

e.g. Ben loves many sports: basketball, tennis, baseball, swimming and hockey.

Identify: Correct Explain: Here the colon is being correctly used to introduce a list, which follows.

1. He kept shouting: "I really want that new iPhone!"

Identify: Correct Explain: Here the colon is used to introduce a direct quotation.

2. She wanted to see three cities in England : London, Manchester and Oxford.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: Here there is a space on either side of the colon. However, the colon is never preceded by a space.

3. You can come and collect me now: I am feeling better.

Identify: Correct Explain: The clause which follows the colon gives an explanation for the initial clause.

4. Smoking on public transport: a bad idea.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: The clause preceding the colon needs to be an independent clause – this one is not.

5. My mother would not stop shouting: "don't be home late."

Identify: Incorrect Explain: The colon is used correctly, but the quotation should start with a capital letter.

6. I have never liked fast food: I work in advertising.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: Here the clause which follows the colon is unrelated to the initial clause – it doesn't give explanation or elaborate.

7. There are two choices at this time: give up or fight.

Identify: Correct Explain: The clause which follows the colon elaborates on the statement made in the initial clause.

8. The new teacher is wonderful: friendly, kind and fair.

Identify: Correct Explain: The colon precedes a list, which elaborates on the initial statement.