Perfect Punctuation
Part Three: The Semicolon and Colon

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Learning Outcomes for Part Three

By the end of this presentation, you should be able to:

- Understand the differences between a semicolon and a colon.
- Improve your writing by using semicolons and colons accurately and skillfully.
Overview of Screencast (Part Three)

1. Explain three rules for the semicolon and common errors.
2. Explain two rules for the colon and common errors.
Semicolon Rule #1

#1. Use a semicolon to show a connection or contrast between two independent clauses.

- Candice reluctantly attended the class; the lecture exceeded her expectations.
- Jeff likes winter holidays in the Caribbean; Tracy prefers skiing in the Rockies.
Semicolon Rule #1 – Common Errors

- Using a semicolon in front of a sentence fragment or single word.

  
  X  Karen wants to leave Saskatoon for one reason; the winter.

  ✓  Karen wants to leave Saskatoon for one reason: the winter.

  ✓  Karen wants to leave Saskatoon for one reason; she doesn’t like the winter.
Semicolon Rule #2

#2. Use a semicolon before a conjunctive adverb or phrase to link independent clauses. Use a comma after the conjunctive adverb.

- Toronto has expanded its subway system; however, commuters still complain of the time it takes to travel to work.
- We had intended to study on Saturday evening; instead, we went to the movies.
Semicolon Rule #2 – Common Errors

- Using a comma instead of a semicolon before a conjunctive adverb (e.g., however, thus, therefore, furthermore) to join two independent clauses (comma splice)

X Ping arrived at the airport on time, however, his flight to Beijing was delayed by six hours.

✓ Ping arrived at the airport on time; however, his flight to Beijing was delayed by six hours.
Semicolon Rule #3

- Use semicolons in a series that contains commas and/or the word “and” to reduce confusion.
  - The students in my evening class come from big cities around the world: Laos, Nigeria; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Dhaka, Bangladesh; and Shanghai, China.
  - Justin Trudeau promised to continue to welcome immigrants, refugees, and visitors to Canada; to grow the economy by 2.5% per year; to forge new trade agreements and renegotiate others; and to reduce Canada’s impact on global warming.
Colon Rule #1

- Use a colon to signify that something else is coming.

  - I know the perfect candidate for the position: my daughter.
  - While she was lost in the blizzard, Jan had only one thought: survival.
  - My brother maintains that there are two types of people: those who believe in helping others, and those who believe in helping themselves.
  - Marie had one all-consuming interest: she loved going up in hot air balloons.
Colon Rule #2

- **Use a colon to introduce a list.**

  ✓ I bought three items for my apartment: bright pink cushions, a funky floor lamp, and a soft green rug.

  ✓ In his short presidency, Donald Trump has already made three disastrous political errors: alienating foreign leaders, damaging trade relations with Mexico, and failing to repeal the Affordable Care Act.
Colon Rule #2 – Common Errors

- Inserting a colon after a verb or incomplete sentence. This error can be corrected by ending the sentence with “the following” or “as follows.”

- Sam’s reasons for staying in Saskatoon are: the beautiful summers, the friendly people, and the easy lifestyle.

- ✔ Sam’s reasons for staying in Saskatoon are the following: the beautiful summers, the friendly people, and the easy lifestyle.

- ✔ Sam’s reasons for staying in Saskatoon are the beautiful summers, the friendly people, and the easy lifestyle.
Summary

- Use semicolons to show a connection or contrast between two independent clauses.
- Use semicolons in a series that also contains commas and the word *and*.
- Use colons to signify that further information is coming, such as a list.