

Punctuation

Apostrophes

The Basics

- Singular words - the apostrophe goes before the s (cat's whiskers)
- Singular words that end in s can have the apostrophe either after the s (James' car or Jess' cat), or you can add another s (James's car or Jess's cat). The choice is yours.
- Plural words - the apostrophe goes after the s (the two girls' dresses)
- Plural words that end in s have an apostrophe after the last s (the princesses' castle)
- Words like **children** and **people** are treated as singular (the people's princess)

Whose dog is that? It is **hers**.

The car's doors fell off, and then **its** engine failed.

it's = it is

Put in the apostrophe

- The boys dog barked
- The teachers book
- The four teachers classes
- My parents house
- Three buildings doors and windows
- The teams managers performance
- One weeks experience
- Three meters worth
- 100s of free CDs
- The two princesses frogs
- Jesus disciples
- Sarah and Davids party

Semi-colons

Semicolons can be used to connect independent clauses (clauses that make sense on their own) that are not joined by a conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet). The semicolon can be replaced by a full stop, or by a conjunction.

- It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.

The semicolon in this example could be replaced by a full stop:

- It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.

Or, it could be replaced by a conjunction:

- It was the best of times, and it was the worst of times.

More on semi-colons

A semicolon can also be used before a transition (connecting) word or phrase. The transition words you are probably most familiar with include **however, therefore, hence, thus, consequently, nevertheless** and **meanwhile**.

It was the best of times; **however**, it was also the worst of times

A semicolon can only ever be used to join **independent clauses**. The following is wrong:

I took my suncream; as it was hot.

as it was hot is not an **independent clause**; it **cannot stand alone** as a sentence.

A well-placed semicolon is always impressive!

Replace the semicolon with an appropriate conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

- I like to read novels; you prefer to read poetry.
- Nobody dared to speak; they all wanted to see what would happen next.
- He was usually so careful; this time he slipped up.
- I took my suncream; it looked like it was going to be a lovely day.
- Dave drives a Ford; John drives a Ferrari.
- London is the largest city in Britain; no where else has such an exciting atmosphere.
- You can choose to buy the hardback; you may prefer to buy the paperback.

Replace with a transition word: include however, therefore, hence, thus, consequently, nevertheless, meanwhile, on the other hand.

- I have been to Italy many times. I have never been to Greece.
- I have spent too much money. I owe my bank thousands of pounds.
- I am learning to speak Spanish. All my friends are learning German.
- Most children learn to swim. Very few children drown
- I like flowers. I hate gardening.
- Jane does not eat meat. You will have to serve her vegetables.

Colons

The purpose of the colon is to introduce information that has been added after a clause.

The clause that comes before the colon must be able to stand alone.

Right

- There's one important thing to remember about the clause that comes before **a colon: it must** be able to stand alone.

Wrong

- The one important thing to remember about the clause that comes before **a colon is: it must** be able to stand alone.
- The clause before the colon doesn't make sense on its own.

Use colons to introduce lists, explanations, summaries and definitions .

- There are three types of people in the world: the good, the bad and the ugly.
- You'll need a lot of equipment for the camping trip: tent, bedding roll, water bottle, sleeping bag, camping stove and a spare set of clothes.
- There are some important steps to take if your car becomes stuck in snow: keep your engine running, keep warm, have a hot drink and try to call for help.
- I always make sure I have three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- **Try these yourself**
- To draw a graph you need the following things: a pencil, graph paper and a ruler.
- There are two things I like about you: your generosity and your sense of humour.
- In my previous jobs I have had several roles: secretary, administrative assistant, cleaner and bar staff.
- This is what I told her: take it out of the oven, or it will burn.
- To get a good job you need two things: a good reference and lots of experience.

Exercises

- Send a stamped addressed envelope to 14 Acacia Avenue, Barnes, London W13 8FG.
- The stark choice is bankruptcy or repossession.
- My lunch consisted of cheese, an apple and a packet of crisps.
- My mother used to say call me anything, but don't call me late for dinner.
- My favourite films are Gone with the Wind, Casablanca and Brief Encounter.
- The countries playing in the quarter-finals included Italy, Germany, Greece and Holland.

Answers

- Send a stamped addressed envelope to the following address: 14 Acacia Avenue, Barnes, London W13 8FG.
- There is a stark choice: bankruptcy or repossession.
- My lunch consisted of many tasty things: cheese, an apple and a packet of crisps.
- My mother loved this saying: call me anything, but don't call me late for dinner.
- My favourite films include many 'golden oldies': Gone with the Wind, Casablanca and Brief Encounter.
- The following countries are playing in the quarter-finals: Italy, Germany, Greece and Holland.