

SEMICOLONS

Knowing when to use semicolons is easier if you follow a few simple rules.

1. Use a semicolon to join two related complete thoughts (sentences/independent clauses) without using a conjunction.

The thunderstorm began just as the audience was leaving; Janet was glad she had taken her umbrella with her to the concert.

2. Use a semicolon to join two related complete thoughts when using conjunctive adverbs (sometimes thought of as transitional words or phrases). Note that a comma follows the conjunction.

The thunderstorm began just as the audience was leaving; consequently, Janet was glad she had taken her umbrella with her to the concert.

3. Use semicolons to separate items in parts of a series that already contain commas.

The menu included brisket, chicken, and pork barbeque; potato, garden, and fruit salads; cherry cobbler, apple pie, and banana pudding for dessert.

EXERCISES

A. DIRECTIONS: Insert semicolons as needed in the following sentences. Check your answers and read the explanations below.

1. All the stores in our neighborhood used to be closed on Sunday now they're open all day and sometimes even on Sunday evening.
2. The city has adjusted its traffic regulations to accommodate bicycles for example, most avenues now have clearly marked bike lanes.
3. The appointment calendar listed Ms. Alvarano, 10:15, Mr. Barks, 11:00, and Mrs. Low, 11:45.
4. Betty Collins, a most unlikely candidate, was nominated on the first ballot, however, she told reporters that the party would be pleased with her nomination when she won the election in November.

B. DIRECTIONS: Insert semicolons where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. Because there was heavy fog, the airport was closed many travelers were delayed all night.
2. Bernie was depressed about his fortieth birthday his spirits improved, however, when he opened his presents.
3. Drivers must always remain alert it's hard to predict, I think, what people will do when they get behind a wheel.
4. The city has adjusted its traffic regulations to accommodate bicycles for example most avenues now have clearly marked bike lanes.
5. If you like to travel, you will probably enjoy Paul Theroux's books he is a master of description.
6. Every year more and more Americans move to the Sunbelt the climate there, it seems, is irresistible.
7. The space program has always generated controversy some people believe that the money could be better spent on earth.

8. Caracas, Venezuela, and Los Angeles, California, share a common traffic problem both cities, I know, have complex freeway systems and enormous amounts of traffic.
9. The quickest route between San Francisco and Los Angeles is the inland highway the most scenic route is the highway along the coast.
10. Raimondo Cavazos, who is the school's top basketball player, enjoys sports in addition to basketball, he plays baseball.

A. ANSWERS:

1. All the stores in our neighborhood used to be closed on Sunday; now they're open all day and sometimes even on Sunday evening.
Use a semicolon to separate closely related independent clauses (complete sentences). If no punctuation is used between the clauses, a run-on or fused sentence is created. If a comma is used between the clauses, a comma splice is created. If the two clauses do not have related ideas, each sentence should be considered a separate sentence.
2. The city has adjusted its traffic regulations to accommodate bicycles; for example, most avenues now have clearly marked bike lanes.
Use a semicolon between independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb that acts as a transitional expression: still, furthermore, otherwise, therefore, however, in fact, etc.
3. The appointment calendar listed Ms. Alvarano, 10:15; Mr. Barks, 11:00; and Mrs. Low, 11:45.
Use a semicolon to separate items in a series when one or more of the items contain commas.
4. Betty Collins, a most unlikely candidate, was nominated on the first ballot; however, she told reporters that the party would be pleased with her nomination when she won the election in November.
The conjunctive adverb "however" properly joins two related independent clauses and needs the semicolon between the main clauses.

B. ANSWERS:

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|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. closed; many | 6. Sunbelt; the climate |
| 2. birthday; his spirits | 7. controversy; some |
| 3. alert; it's | 8. problem; both |
| 4. bicycles; for example, | 9. highway; the most |
| 5. books; he is | 10. sports; in addition |

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STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER (SLAC)

Texas State University-San Marcos