

Colons and Semicolons

It is very easy to mix up colons and semicolons when punctuating. However, they do have different purposes.

Colons

Use these to show that you are going to explain more about what you've just said. Colons show a move from something general to something specific. They are often used to introduce quotes in academic work.

For example:	Several friends have provided me with inspiration: Tim, Ian and, above all, Larry.
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Colons are often used to introduce quotes in academic work.

For example:	Mae West had one golden rule for handling men: "Tell the pretty ones they're smart and tell the smart ones they're pretty".
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Semicolons

Use these to link two complete sentences when their meaning is interrelated. Semicolons replace joining words such as *and*, *but* or *while*.

For example:	It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.
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Always make sure that the text on either side of the semicolon makes a complete sentence.

A semicolon may also be used after a colon to separate lengthy items in a list.

For example:	You will need the following: a pair of scissors; a stapler; a piece of blue card, approximately 10cm x 20cm; some glitter; and pens for colouring.
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References and further reading:

Trask, R.L. (1997) *The Penguin guide to punctuation*. London: Penguin Books.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.