PUNCTUATION−COMMA, COLON AND SEMICOLON

In any writing you do, you need to keep the reader in mind. To make your message easy to understand, use the comma, colon and semicolon to help perfect and emphasise what you mean.

Name & Symbol….	What it does ……
1. Comma [,]	• To prevent misreading, use a comma to separate words that could be mistakenly linked on the first reading **[e.g. Overall bycatch threatens; Overall, bycatch threatens]** • For dates, use a comma to separate an event from the day, day from the date and the month from the year **[e.g. A one day symposium, Tuesday, 14th June, 2016]** • Use a comma to separate more than two ideas (as in a list) **[e.g. The company's activities will impact the local, national and international markets]** • Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives when the adjective does not have to be listed in any particular order [**e.g. Lady Gaga has been described as clever, creative, irresistible, scintillating, strange and energised; Australia's native honey-producing bees are tiny (305mm), black, stingless and live…]** *to test for correctness, can you insert 'and' between each adjective and it still makes sense? Can you change the adjectives around without changing the meaning? • When adjectives build up meaning from word to word as they come closer to the noun, and must stay in a certain place so that the description makes sense, do not use a comma between the words **[e.g. Three large intersecting shapes; strange flying objects]** • You can use a comma to introduce a quotation **[e.g. The lecturer wrote, 'Your essay is well constructed but remember…'.]** • A comma should not be used to separate a subject from its verb [**e.g. enhancing the experience, requires the group to/ enhancing the experience requires the group to]** • Use a comma to make clear that a word, phrase, or clause is not essential (is secondary) to the intended meaning of a sentence **[e.g. *The second group, led by the student mentor, followed the itinerary; they will be using university-age participants, 17 to 21-year-old undergraduates.]** *when the parenthetical information is mid-sentence, both ends must be separated by a comma • Use commas to contrast ideas **[e.g. English word formation, unlike Japanese, is more complex]** • Use a comma when two independent clauses are joined by *and, but, or, so* **[e.g. The business plan was incomplete, so additional financial information was requested]**
2. Colon [:]	• A colon breaks a sentence, where the second part of the sentence reaffirms, explains, exemplifies or answers a question raised by the first **[e.g. There is one option: regenerate the bush]**

	• The colon is another way of saying *'and'* or *'in this particular way'* or *'yes!'* (where you have been satisfied) or a sense of *'ah'* (that's right) • Sometimes what follows the colon takes the form of a list [**e.g. Once widespread, the common wombat is restricted to the southern parts of the continent: Tasmania, eastern New South Wales, eastern Victoria, and scattered populations in...**] • The colon can set off a long quotation • The colon can introduce examples

3. Semicolon [;]	• You do not have to use a semi-colon but deciding to use it can move you beyond using a series of simple sentences to communicate your message; it develops sentence variety and sophistication, and as a result, can enhance readers' interest in what you have to say
	• You use a semi-colon to bring together two very closely related **independent clauses** to make a whole. In other words its use helps you better express the relationship between two or more messages [**e.g. it was nearly dark; there was no hope of reaching safety now**]
	    - The second clause may explain the first
	    - The second clause may contrast the first (replacing a phrase such as 'on the other hand')
	    - the second clause may define the first
	    - The second clause may be describing the next step in a process
	    - The second clause may present the significance, cause or consequence
	     of what was stated in the first clause
	• Generally, the semi-colon is used instead of a **conjunction** (and comma) **BUT –** To emphasise or contrast the second clause, you can add a conjunction (*and* or *but*) after the semi-colon
	    - To introduce the second clause, you can add an **adverbial conjunction** after the semi-colon

Style guides:

APA Style: http://www.apastyle.org/search.aspx?query=Punctuation
Harvard Style Manual: http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/tips-grammar-punctuation-and-style
MLA Style: https://libguides.jcu.edu.au/referencing/MLA8
The Chicago Manual of Style:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Punctuation.html

Other Punctuation Guides:

The University of Western Australia:
http://www.staff.uwa.edu.au/procedures/communications/publishing/written-style/punctuation
The University of Auckland:
http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subject-guides/med/setref-vancouver.htm#additional

Other links:

Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/
The Punctuation Guide: http://www.thepunctuationguide.com/apostrophe.html#possessives

The Writer's Handbook: https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/index.html

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