

Punctuation

- **Semi-colons, colons and dashes to mark independent clauses**
- **Colons and semi-colons in lists**
- **Hyphens to avoid ambiguity**



Using Semi-Colons to link clauses



Semi-colons are used in formal writing.

Semi-colons can be used to link two independent clauses that are *closely related*.

We tried as hard as we could. We crashed within seconds.

We tried as hard as we could; we crashed within seconds.



Our machine had taken months to build; it was now in pieces.

We swam for the shore; the crowd applauded and laughed.

The **semi-colon** emphasises the *close link*.

It links main clauses like a co-ordinating conjunction. The two clauses have *equal weight*.

To link two clauses: replace the full stop with a semi-colon and then use lower case to start the second main clause.



Using Colons to link clauses

Colons are used slightly differently.

They also show a link between clauses, when *the second clause expands the first*.

She flew a record-breaking distance. Her craft was aerodynamic.

She flew a record-breaking distance: her craft was aerodynamic.



She deserved her success: she had planned her design carefully.

She was overwhelmed: she had not expected to break the record.

Colons are used
in formal
writing.

The **colon** emphasises how the second clause expands on the first.

It links clauses like a subordinating conjunction. The second clause has *less weight* than the first.

To link two clauses: replace the full stop with a **colon** and then use lower case to start the second main clause.



Using Dashes to link clauses

We can use **dashes** like colons and semi-colons.
They indicate grammatical breaks.
They are used in informal writing—the rules are less precise.

My heart was beating like crazy—it was awesome .



I'm so proud—I can't wait to tell Nan.

It just kept going—you're a complete hero.

Dashes are used
in informal
writing.



To link two clauses: replace the full stop with a **dash** and then use lower case to start the second main clause.

Colons in lists

Colons can be used to introduce lists.

We use them if the list comes after an *independent clause*.

You may be required to bring many items: custard pies, a towel and a change of clothes.

I was most impressed by the following: the size of the beards, the range of styles and the care that was taken.

To be successful you should try your best, listen to instructions and have fun.



Colons are used
in formal
writing.

The **colon** comes after
the independent clause.

We do not use a colon if
the words before are not
an independent clause.

'To be successful you should' is not an independent clause. We do not use a colon.

Semi-Colons in lists

Semi-colons can be used to separate items in lists.

We use them when it will make the list clearer.

The sights we saw amazed us: bright lights; babies, supported by their parents, in the centre of the arena; an enthusiastic, noisy, shouting crowd; and, watching carefully, a group of expert-looking judges.

The sights we saw amazed us: bright lights, babies, supported by their parents, in the centre of the arena, an enthusiastic, noisy, shouting crowd and, watching carefully, a group of expert-looking judges.

The **semi-colons** separate the four items:

- lights
- babies
- crowd
- judges

Without **semi-colons** it is not clear how many items there are.

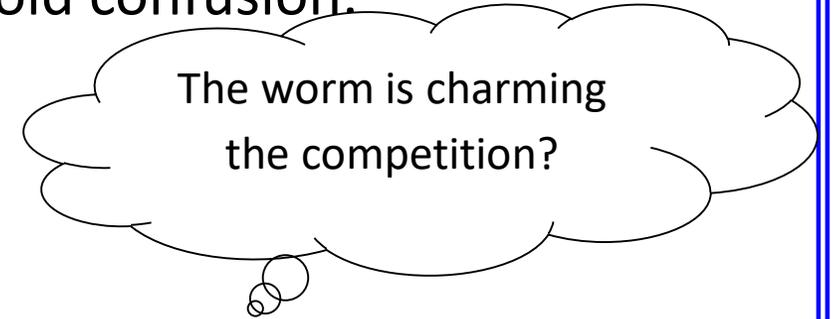
When the items in a list already include commas, it helps to use semi-colons.

Using hyphens to avoid ambiguity

Hyphens can be used to join compound adjectives to avoid confusion.

a worm charming competition

a worm-charming competition



Hyphens can be used with prefixes to avoid confusion.

Satnam resigned last week.

Satnam re-signed last week.



Hyphens can also be used when a prefix creates repeated vowels e.g. re-enter (not reenter)