



The **semicolon ;** and the **colon :** are mainly used in formal writing.

- A **semicolon** separates **two or more statements** which are related to each other in a sentence. The sentence would still make sense if we used a **conjunction**.

The house was very spooky; the wind whistled through the broken windows.

The house was very spooky **and** the wind whistled through the broken windows.



A **semicolon** can also be used instead of a comma for **items in a list** where the items are **more than one word**.

There were many animals in the zoo: stately giraffes with their long, graceful necks; lumbering elephants plodding around the enclosure; mischievous monkeys chattering and swinging from the branches; brightly coloured parrots squawking and talking.

- The **colon** is used to introduce a list.

You will need the following: eggs, flour, milk, sugar and butter.

A **colon** is also used to **introduce a result**, or instead of **for example**.

The committee made a decision: it would fund the new sports centre.

We have some things to discuss: the cost and the time it will take.

A **colon** is also used to **balance one statement against another**.

Jim remembered his passport: Tom forgot his.



Focus

A Say why a *semicolon* has been used in these sentences.

- 1 The shops were busy; people were in search of a bargain.
- 2 Sam thought about all he had to do: feed the rabbits; take the dog for a walk; get the car serviced; mow the lawn.



B Say why a *colon* has been used in these sentences.

- 1 Remember to bring: pens, pencils, a ruler, a rubber and a notebook.
- 2 The choice was made: the Christmas pantomime would be *Cinderella*.
- 3 Arguing doesn't solve anything: talking sensibly does.

Practice

Copy and *punctuate* these sentences.

- 1 Young men play football older men play golf.
- 2 The park looked beautiful gardeners worked tirelessly through the seasons.
- 3 We need a good striker someone from the Premier League.
- 4 Kim looked around down the High Street many well-known shops had closed litter blew about the once tidy streets graffiti scarred the walls.
- 5 The fire alarm went off the fire brigade was quickly on the scene.

Semicolons and colons are missing.



Extension

In less formal writing, you can use a dash to introduce further information instead of a colon.

All the apples were the same – red and juicy.

Using *semicolons*, *colons* and *dashes*, write sentences about:

- 1 a high wind and a fallen tree
- 2 a detailed list of what you did in school yesterday
- 3 a list of fruit to buy in the supermarket
- 4 Mum and Dad making a decision about something, and what that decision is
- 5 the sort of place you would like to go on holiday, and an example
- 6 one person doing something – another person doing the opposite.

