

Colon

The Craft of Writing · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

You need advice about the colon (:) . . . a full stop on top of a full stop. It's different to the semi-colon (;) which is a full stop on top of a comma. I never use semi-colons. In all writing I have ever seen, a comma or a full stop is always better than a semi-colon (in my opinion). Semi-colons simply make sentences longer. Semi-colons are beloved by writers who use flowery language and long sentences (in my opinion). However, the colon has the strong and useful purpose of "introduction".

Use a colon to introduce a quote.

The Treasurer said: "Watch my lips. No new taxes."

Use a colon to introduce written material.

This is the 231-word summary by Judge Smith: "XXXXXX etc."

Use a colon to introduce several points.

The government faces two obstacles to re-election: high inflation and a financial scandal.

Use a colon when the second part of the sentence is an explanation of the first part.

Bill couldn't go: he had 47 tasks still to do.

Use a colon when the second part of the sentence is a re-statement of the first part.

Nadia looked happy: her smile was wide and her eyes sparkled.

Colons are used to dramatic effect, especially in headlines.

Nicole: Tom's mad!

Tom: Nicole's a gold-digger!

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