

# Clarifying Punctuation

*Punctuation was created to aid readers. Without it, ideas run together and your reader may misinterpret your ideas. Here are guidelines for use on these pieces of punctuation: commas, semicolons and colons.*

## COMMAS

Use a comma when joining two complete sentences with a conjunction such as “but” or “and.”

**Example:** *I ate dinner, but I did not eat dessert.*

**Example:** *I ate dinner, and I ate dessert.*

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Do **not** use a comma if the second group of words is not a complete sentence.

**Example:** *I ate my dinner and also ate dessert.*

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Use a comma after an introductory phrase or word.

**Example:** *Because I am a college student with no money, I ate dinner at home.*

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Use a comma between items in a list.

**Example:** *My dinner consisted of a sandwich, soup, and salad.*

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Use a comma to separate words that interrupt the flow of a sentence or modify a noun.

**Example:** *Casey, my dog, ate the dinner right off my plate!*

**Example:** *Without hesitation, my mother scolded Casey for eating my dinner.*

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Use a comma when introducing quotations.

**Example:** *My mother yelled, “Dinner time!”*

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## SEMICOLONS

Use a semicolon to join two complete sentences that are related. If a period, which allows a breath when reading aloud, seems unnecessary, replace it with a semicolon.

**Example:** *My mother made dinner; the dinner tasted delicious.*

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Use a semicolon with words like “however” or phrases like “for example.”

**Example:** *I ate dinner; however, I was hungry an hour later.*

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Use a semicolon to clarify a list of items that already contains punctuation.

**Example:** *My favorite foods are Italian, like spaghetti and lasagna; Mexican, especially nachos and burritos; and French pastries, like chocolate éclairs.*

## COLONS

Use a colon to introduce a list.

**Example:** *My dinner consisted of the following: grilled chicken, rice, fruit salad, and steamed vegetables.*

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Use a colon for further explanation with two sentences.

**Example:** *My dinner reminds me of a garden: both have wonderful smells and vibrant colors.*

## DROP-IN HOURS

Monday – Thursday: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sunday: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.