

When to Use Colons & Semi Colons

Colons

1. You can think of a **colon** as a colourful full stop that flags up what is to follow. For example:

I have used a colon to prepare the reader for this example.

2. They can be used for introducing things such as: lists, examples, new paragraphs etc.

Another example of this might be:

I went shopping and I bought: two computers, a ream of paper and a printer cartridge.

Semi colons

1. **Semi colons** can be used in a compound sentence, where both clauses have equal importance (see sentence structure sheet). The **semi colon** replaces the 'conjunction'. For example:

*He came indoors because he was cold **so** I told him to have a bath.*

The word **so** is a 'conjunction', joining the two clauses. You could, instead, use a semi colon:

*He came indoors because he was cold**;** I told him to have a bath.*

2. **Semi colons** can also be used in a long list instead of commas, to separate the items:

I want you to pack the following things for me: two pairs of sandals; three tee shirts; four dresses, one blue, one white, one striped and one yellow; then finally, sixteen pairs of socks.

Note that commas are also used, like a smaller list within a bigger one.

Please also note that a **colon** was used to **introduce** this list.