

Mastering Punctuation with Max and Kit

Learning objective: To understand how to correctly use colons and semicolons to link clauses and introduce lists.

Use these flashcards to test your knowledge of punctuation. Read the front of the card, think of the answer, then check the back to see if Max the monkey and Kit the fox agree with your explanation!

What is the main job of a colon (:) when introducing a list?

A colon is used to introduce a list of items after a complete sentence has been written.

Max the monkey wants to write: 'I need to buy three items: bananas, grapes and nuts.' Is this correct?

Yes, because the colon follows a complete, independent clause.

What is the main job of a semicolon (;)?

A semicolon is used to join two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning instead of using a conjunction like 'and' or 'but'.

If you have two separate sentences, can you use a semicolon to join them?

Yes, as long as the two sentences are closely related and could stand alone as their own sentences.

Kit the fox says: 'I like coding; it is very fun.' Is this a correct use of a semicolon?

Yes, because both 'I like coding' and 'it is very fun' are independent clauses that relate to each other.

True or False: You should always use a capital letter immediately after a semicolon.

False. You should only use a capital letter after a semicolon if the word is a proper noun (like a name or place).

Can you use a colon to separate two independent clauses?

Yes, a colon can be used to join two independent clauses if the second clause explains, illustrates, or expands upon the first.

Which punctuation mark would you use to list items: a colon or a semicolon?

A colon is used to introduce the list.

Is the following sentence correct? 'The library was quiet; everyone was reading.'

Yes, because the two clauses are closely related and independent.

Max is writing a list: 'The shop sells: pens, rulers and paper.' Why is this incorrect?

You should not put a colon between a verb (sells) and its objects. It should be: 'The shop sells three items: pens, rulers and paper.'

What should you check before using a semicolon?

Check that there is a complete sentence (independent clause) on both sides of the semicolon.

Fill in the gap: A colon acts like a _____ to show that what follows is important or related to the first part.

Gateway or signpost.