

Colon, Semicolon or Dash?

Decide whether column 'b' needs a colon, semicolon or a dash.
Give a reason for the punctuation mark you have chosen.

a	b : ; -	c
I love going for walks		it's good for my health.
Reason:		
I love watching England play football		I hate watching them play hockey.
Reason:		
You should stop walking so close to the edge		otherwise, you're going to fall off
Reason:		
I understand if you want to go home		I know you're not feeling well.
Reason:		

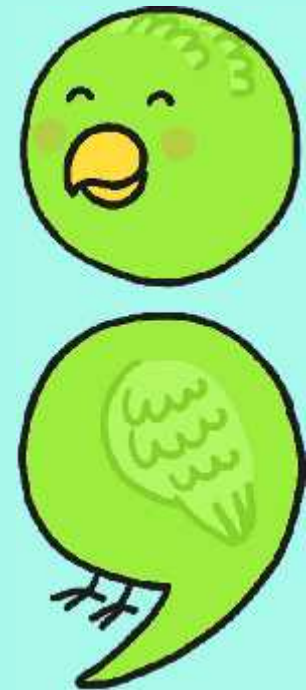
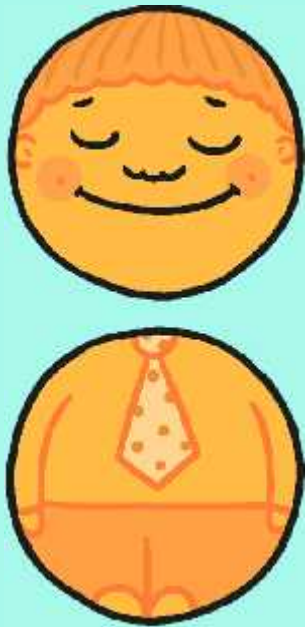
Colon, Semicolon or Dash?

Suggested Answers

There are no fixed rules but these are our suggestions.

a	b : ; -	c
I love going for walks	:	it's good for my health.
Reason:		
I love watching England play football	;	I hate watching them play hockey.
Reason:		
You should stop walking so close to the edge	-	otherwise, you're going to fall off
Reason:		
I understand if you want to go home	-	I know you're not feeling well.
Reason:		

Using Semicolons, Colons or Dashes to mark boundaries between independent clauses.



What Are Independent Clauses?

An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence.

It explains a complete thought and always has a subject and verb.

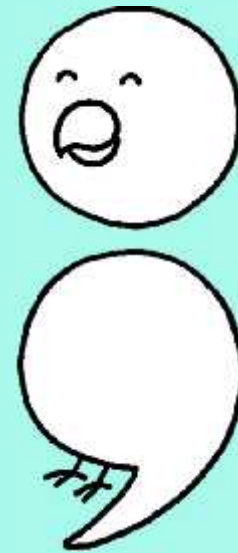
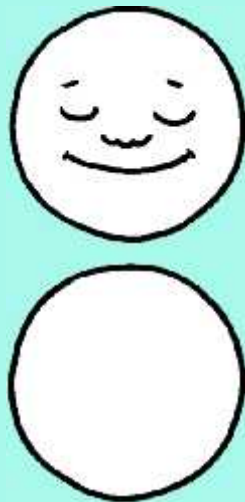
Here are some examples:



Separating Independent Clauses

Semicolons, colons and dashes can be used to separate independent clauses where it is not appropriate to use conjunctions like 'and', 'but' or 'so'.

The next few slides explain how to use each method of separation.



Separating Independent Clauses with a Semicolon

Semicolons can be used to separate independent clauses that are related. For example:

Some children like to play tag at playtime; others like to play quieter games.

The writer might have also chosen to write it like this:

“Some children like to play tag at playtime, but others like to play quieter games.”

The two clauses could be linked using a conjunction and a comma, or without the conjunction using a semicolon.

Separating Independent Clauses with a Colon

Use colons to separate independent clauses where the second clause explains a bit more about the previous clause.

There are six cars left in the race: three of them are Ferraris.



Separating Independent Clauses with a Dash

A dash is like a less formal version of a semicolon, which makes it more appropriate to use in less formal types of writing.

I fell over at school today – that was embarrassing.



Separating Independent Clauses with a Dash

Dashes can also highlight an independent clause inserted between two other clauses.

Dashes interrupt your sentence and draw attention towards the independent clause. Here, a dash is used like a bracket for parenthesis, but it draws more attention to what you are inserting.

My friend James – everyone calls him Jim – has got curly brown hair.



Review



Semicolons: separate closely related independent clauses.

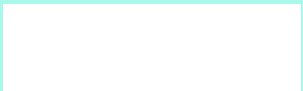


Colons: separate closely related independent clauses where the second clause helps to explain the first.



Dashes: a more informal semicolon or used to draw attention to an independent clause between two other clauses.

THE END



Date: _____

Name: _____

Using Semicolons, Colons or Dashes to Mark Boundaries Between Independent Clauses: Teacher Notes

An Independent Clause

An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence. It explains a complete thought and has a subject and a verb.

He played hockey.

Separating Independent Clauses with a Semicolon

Use a semicolon to separate two closely related independent clauses if you do **not** want to use a connective like 'and', 'but' or 'so'.

Some children like to play tag at playtime; others like to play role playing games.

Semicolons can also be used to link two independent clauses that are linked with an adverb or transitional phrase (however, or, on the other hand).

I enjoy maths at school; however, I also enjoy literacy.

I really enjoyed the new Transformers film; as a matter of fact, I have enjoyed them all.

Separating Independent Clauses with a Colon

Use a colon in a similar way to a semicolon (to separate two closely related clauses), but use it when the second clause gives more information about the first clause:

There are six cars left in the race: three of them are Ferraris.

Remember, semicolons are used to separate two related independent clauses and colons are used when the second clause helps to explain or expands on the first clause.

A colon draws the reader's attention to whatever follows it. You can also use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list or a quotation.

This recipe requires the following ingredients: eggs, flour, sugar and milk.

Remember the last thing I said to you: "Don't look down."

Separating Independent Clauses with a Dash

A dash is less formal than a semicolon so can be more suited to informal writing or phrases. It does however suggest a stronger separation than simply using a comma.

Dashes can also be used to interrupt your sentence with an independent clause. Use it to highlight an independent clause inserted inside other clauses. A good way to use dashes is to use them like brackets, but when you want to draw more attention to what you are inserting.

I told him to slow down – obviously he didn't listen.

My friend James –everyone calls him Jim- has got bright blonde hair.