

## **Punctuation II:** Semi-colons, Colons, and Apostrophes

### **When to use a Semi-colon:**

- 1. To join independent clauses in compound sentences that do not have a coordinating conjunction (and, or, but..) and commas as connectors.** You can use connector words such as “however,” “thus,” “moreover,” and “therefore” in these sentences.

*EX.* The shirt was \$150; **however**, it was originally \$300 before going on the sale rack.

There was no running and shouting; all the children behaved well; therefore, they will all get a cookie.

Working mothers pay an average of \$55 a week for child care; this means that many women pay nearly half of their weekly salary to child care workers.

- 2. To join long or complicated items in a series that already has commas.**

*EX.* The instructors were Dr. Manly Wall, Philosophy; Dr. Sara Gilman, Genealogy; and Dr. Andrew Smith, Biological Anthropology.

I recommend this doctor because she communicates well with patients, colleagues, and pharmacists; is prompt during services; and has won several awards for service and research.

- 3. To separate long or complex independent clauses that are joined by coordinating conjunctions, and that cannot be joined by a comma because the sentence would be confusing.**

*EX.* Sarah, the head chef, wants to teach the culinary arts class, the sugar sculpture class, and the specialty cake class at the local community college; but her schedule during the week does not permit her to teach the classes at night, which is when most students would be able to attend.

### **When to use a Colon:**

- 1. After an independent clause that precedes a list.**

*EX.* The use of these punctuation marks often confuses students: comma, semicolon, colon, hyphen, and dash.

There are three main beliefs stemming from Martin Luther’s theology: the priesthood of the believer, the availability of the scripture, and salvation by faith, not works.

- 2. To separate an example, explanation, or rule from a preceding independent clause.**

*EX.* After a sleepless night, the senator made her decision: she would not seek the office for Presidency.

Music is more than a mechanical arrangement of sounds: it is an expression of emotion.

**3. After the salutation of a business letter.**

*EX.* Dear Mr. Prescott:  
Dear Faculty Member:

**4. In the heading of a business memo.**

*EX.* TO:  
SUBJECT:

**5. Between the hour and the minutes in time expression.**

*EX.* 5:30 pm

**6. Between the chapter and the verse in the Bible, in citations for some literary works, and between the volume and the number of some publications.**

*EX.* John 3:16  
Part 4:82  
Vol. 3:7

**7. As part of a title.**

*EX.* Reaching Your Full Potential: Success in College and Life

**8. In a bibliography between the place of publication and the name of the publisher.**

*EX.* New York, New York: McMillan Publishing Group, 1987.

**When to use the Apostrophe:**

1. **To form possessives of nouns** – to see if you need to make a possessive noun, turn the phrase around and make it an “of the..” phrase.

*EX.* the boy’s hat = that hat of the boy  
three days’ journey = the journey of three days

**\*If the noun after “of” is an object, building, or a piece of furniture, then no apostrophe is needed!**

*EX.* Room of the hotel = hotel room  
Door of the car = car door  
Leg of the table = table leg

**\*If you need to make a possessive, follow these rules:**

- 1. add 's to the singular form of the word, even if it ends in -s.**  
the owner's car, James's hat
- 2. add 's to the plural forms that do not end in -s**  
the children's game, the geese's honking
- 3. add ' to the end of plural nouns that end in -s**  
houses' roofs, three friends' letter
- 4. add 's to the end of compound words**  
my brother-in-law's money
- 5. add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object**  
Tom and Anne's apartment

**2. To show omission of letters – use apostrophes to show contractions**

*A contraction is a word in which one or more letters have been omitted. Place the apostrophe where the omitted letter(s) would go.*

Do not = don't  
I am = I'm  
Who is = who's  
Did not = didn't

**3. To form plurals of lower case letters**

*EX.* Don't forget to mind your p's and q's.

- **Don't use apostrophes for possessive pronouns or for noun plurals-**

~~His' book~~

~~The group made it's decision.~~

- **It's and Its** – It's is a contraction for it is. Its is a possessive pronoun meaning "belonging to it"