

The Christ College Writing Center
Punctuation Info Sheet

A **semicolon** is a punctuation mark that is used to connect major elements of a sentence. It generally calls attention to the words that follow it.

The 5 Rules of Semicolons:

1. **Use a semicolon in place of a period to separate two sentences where the conjunction has been left out.**
 - a. I have paid my tuition; therefore, I expect all the privileges given to current students.
2. **It is preferable to use a semicolon before introductory words (*namely, however, therefore*) when they introduce a complete sentence. It is also preferable to use a comma after the introductory word.**
 - a. As we discussed, you will bring two items; i.e., a pen or pencil and a notebook are not optional.
3. **Use either a semicolon or a comma before introductory words (*namely, however, therefore*) when they introduce a list following a complete sentence. Use a comma after the introductory word.**
 - a. You will want to bring many items; for example, a pen, a pencil, and a notebook.
4. **Use a semicolon to separate units of a series when one or more of the units contain commas.**
 - a. The school has students who have come from St. Augustine, Florida; Los Angeles, California; and even London, England.
5. **Use a semicolon between two sentences joined by a conjunction when one or more commas appear in the first sentence.**
 - a. When I finish here, I will be glad to help you; and that is a promise I will keep.

Periods should be used at the end of a complete sentence, or after an indirect question. If the last word in a sentence ends in a period, do not follow it with another period.

- *On Monday, I went to the hospital.*
- *I know that M.D. She is my sister.*
- *He asked where the ER was.*

Question Marks should be used only after a direct question, or after a sentence that is half-statement and half-question.

- *Will you go with me?*
- *You do care, don't you?*

Parentheses are used to enclose words or figures that clarify or are used as an aside. Also use parentheses to enclose numbers or letters used for listed items, and periods will go inside parentheses only if any entire sentence is inside the parentheses.

- *He finally answered (after taking a minute to think) that he did not understand the question.*
- *We need an ER physician who can (1) think quickly, (2) treat patients respectfully, and (3) handle complaints from the public.*

For Additional Information:

A Writer's Reference: P1-P10, pp. 259-305

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/566/01/>

- *Please read the analysis (I enclosed it as Attachment A.).*

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