

USE of the SEMICOLON

A **SEMICOLON** is most often used in compound sentences **between two independent clauses** if these clauses are related in meaning.

Example: I often click my tongue; it is my only revenge.

Example: Sit down; I will make us some coffee.

Example: Rhoda and Nate were more than close friends; they were inseparable.

PRACTICE: Insert a semicolon where it is needed in each sentence.

1. He was a polite mugger he asked me if I wanted one lump or two.
2. Melvin is very thrifty he would have asked for separate checks at the Last Supper.
3. Peebles has just invented a twelve-foot pole it's for girls who wouldn't touch a guy with a ten-foot pole.
4. My ancestors fell at Bunker Hill, at Waterloo, and at Warsaw they were rather clumsy soldiers.

These **CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS** are often used between the two independent clauses joined by semicolon. *(Please notice that a comma is placed after the conjunctive adverb)*

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| therefore | furthermore | indeed |
| consequently | moreover | in fact |
| thus | also | henceforth |
| however | in addition | still |
| nevertheless | besides | namely |
| then | otherwise | likewise |

*Example: Larry could not come to class, so he gave his homework to another student to turn in for him; **also**, he called the teacher.*

*Example: Our library is expanding; **therefore**, it would appreciate books on science, travel, business, and sports.*

Notice that both of the above sentences contain **two independent clauses** with a conjunctive adverb between them. The conjunctive adverbs are **ONLY** used with semicolons when they are between two independent clauses; otherwise, they usually just take commas.

*Example: No one was injured; **however**, the car was totaled. (between two independent clauses)*

*No one was injured; the car, **however**, was totaled. (within one independent clause)*

*No one was injured; the car was totaled, **however**. (within one independent clause)*

PRACTICE: Insert a semicolon where it is needed in each sentence.

5. When I get home from school, I will eat dinner then, I will go out.
6. I went to the address you gave me however, if Tom lives there, he lives on a vacant lot.
7. To succeed, however, you must work hard furthermore, you must work carefully.

A **SEMICOLON** is also used to **separate a series of items if the items themselves contain commas.**

Example: William was introduced to Jason, a pharmacist; Maynard, a salesman; and Walter, a chiropractor.

Example: Hatty had been married to Walter, so mean that he put a burglar alarm on the trash can; Franklin, so smart that he did crossword puzzles in ink; and Sigmund, so thrifty that he tried to buy postage stamps wholesale.

PRACTICE: Insert semicolons where necessary.

8. In our fabulous three-day tourist special, we will visit many lovely cities such as Paris, France Madrid, Spain Rome, Italy Hamburg, Germany and London, England.
9. The doctor made Mr. Smuggins give up butter, eggs, and fat meat, cigarettes, cigars and wine, women, and song.
10. I loved Beijing, China Cairo, Egypt and Tokyo, Japan.

FINAL PRACTICE: Insert semicolons as needed.

11. I am sorry, but I have another appointment otherwise, I would be happy to go.
12. For Christmas, Charlene received some lovely gifts: video tapes from her sister, her aunt, and her friend clothes from her mother, her grandmother, and her cousin and perfume from her boyfriend and brother.
13. No scientist has been able to produce a temperature of absolute zero however, our janitor has come very close.
14. All night she heard the yapping of the neighborhood dogs: Flash, a collie Dash, a dachshund and Hash, a mongrel.
15. The old cowboy wanted to be buried on the lone prairie with his face down he wanted to see where he was going.
16. Most Americans refuse to give up unhealthful habits our medical costs are therefore higher than those of most other countries.
17. The final exam was finally over at last, Becky felt free to enjoy herself once more.
18. The house was for sale however, the price was too high for that neighborhood.
19. The increased time devoted to watching television is not the only cause of the decline in reading ability however, it is one of the main causes.
20. Many people would be lost without television they would not know how to amuse themselves.