

Semicolon Rules

A semicolon ; is a period overtop a comma. It indicates an audible pause. It is slightly longer than a comma, but shorter than a period.

1. Use a semicolon to join two or more closely related independent clauses that are **not** connected with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so).

We walked along the beach; the waves lapped gently at our toes.

2. Use a semicolon to join two closely related independent clauses that have a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so) if those clauses contain commas. The semicolon then "outranks" the commas.

Mary wanted the package with blue, red, and green balloons; but Jane wanted the one with pink, purple, and light blue.

3. Use a semicolon before words such as *therefore, thus, however, also, besides, finally, indeed, instead, meanwhile, moreover, namely, for example, for instance, nevertheless, next, still, then* when the word introduces a complete sentence. These words should connect two independent clauses in a compound sentence. Be sure to use a comma after the conjunctive adverb.

I didn't stop by the grocery store; instead, I pulled something out of the freezer.

****You cannot merge two sentences with a comma... especially with the word *however!***

4. Use a semicolon to separate items in a list that contain commas.

They planned to go to Jackson Hole, Wyoming to visit relatives; Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota; and then to some of the other national parks such as Canyonlands, Bryce, and Zion.

Add semicolons in the sentence below. On the line, write the rule number:

_____ 1. I thought long and hard before making my decision I knew what I had to do.

_____ 2. My mom sent me to my room to find the things I needed for the trip -- toothpaste, toothbrush, and dental floss a change of clothing, including underwear and my favorite stuffed animals, Fluffy and Bobo.

_____ 3. I wanted to go on the trip however my parents said we had to go visit Grandma.

_____ 4. I've been to Seattle, Washington London, England and Sydney, Australia.

_____ 5. I was thinking I would bring chicken, steak, and corn on the cob to throw on the grill at the party but then I learned the party was canceled because Jamie, our host, broke her arm.

_____ 6. We didn't know how to fix the pipes therefore we called a plumber.

_____ 7. Snow set in early nevertheless the concert will go on.

_____ 8. The accident looked bad two people were severely injured.

_____ 9. Bob thought he would get an A on his paper however, he did not proof read as carefully as he should have.

_____ 10. Call me in the morning we'll work out the details then.

_____ 11. Bring a dish to share for example Adam said he would bring lasagna.

_____ 12. Some people do their best writing on the computer others prefer to write with a pen or pencil.

_____ 13. I like swimming however I hate all the maintenance a pool requires.

_____ 14. My professor, Dr. Bateman, went to Munich, Germany over spring break he was doing research for a book.

_____ 15. We brought our cat, Speckles our dog, Hank and our parrot, Coco.

_____ 16. Austin likes playing video games Jess prefers curling up on the couch to read a good book.

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