

Writing Guide: Semicolon

1. Use a semicolon between closely related independent clauses. (An independent clause is a word group that can stand alone as a sentence.)

Annette likes to use a comma and a coordinating conjunction; Eduardo prefers the semicolon.

The thesis statement presents the main idea of an essay; the body paragraphs provide support.

(Note: A period can also be used between the independent clauses.)

2. Use a semicolon between closely related independent clauses that are joined by a transition (Ex.: *then, for example, nevertheless, on the other hand*)

Karl remembered all of the grammar rules; however, he forgot all of the punctuation.

Kim wants to be a doctor; Stacey, on the other hand, hopes to be a lawyer.

(Note: A period can also be used between the independent clauses.)

3. Use semicolons between items in a series that contain internal punctuation. The internal punctuation will usually be commas.

This semester, Helen is studying representative novels: *Pride and Prejudice*, which remains a classic comedy of manners; *The Sound and the Fury*, which incorporates stream of consciousness; and *The Stranger*, which introduces existential philosophy.