

Colon, Semi-Colon or Dash?

:

A colon can be used to:

- introduce a list
- separate two independent clauses when the second clause explains or illustrates the first clause

;

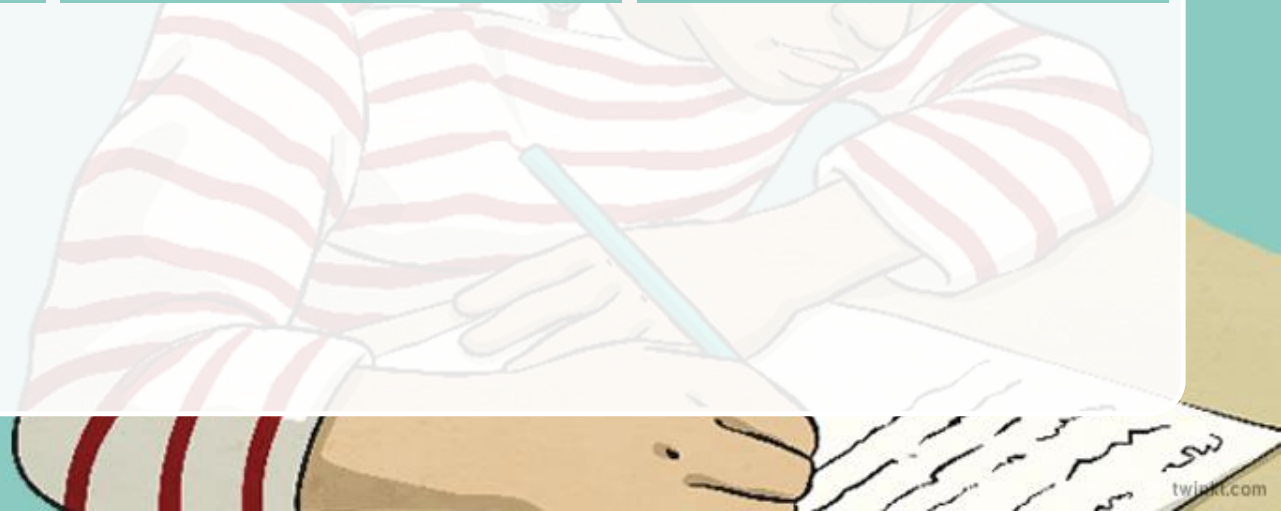
A semi-colon can be used to:

- separate items in a list
- separate two **closely related** independent clauses instead of using a conjunction

-

A dash can be used to:

- indicate parenthesis within a sentence
- separate two independent clauses (more commonly used in informal writing)



What Is an Independent Clause?

We are focusing on colons, semi-colons and dashes used to separate or link two independent clauses. So what is an independent clause?

An independent clause is a clause that can stand on its own.

The **safari** **was** amazing.



An independent (or main) clause always has a **subject** + a **verb** = complete thought.

Independent or Not?

Sort the following clauses depending on whether they are independent or dependent (cannot stand on their own – can be called ‘subordinate clauses’):

Independent Clause	my dog loves bananas we visited London we will go to the Moon
Dependent (Subordinate) Clause	when we visited London if we go to the Moon because my dog loves bananas

Do They Link?

We are focusing on joining two independent clauses so they **must** make sense alone but they also must be linked in some way if we are going to use a semi-colon, colon or dash in place of a full stop. In the following examples, decide whether it is possible to link the independent clauses or if a full stop is needed:

James enjoys playing tennis

: ; -

he doesn't like football.

He was late for school

: ; -

his alarm clock hadn't gone off.

After school, I played outside

.

tomorrow is my birthday.

Lilies are my favourite flowers

: ; -

they smell awful though.

Now we will think about which punctuation mark would be the best to link these independent clauses. Look back at the definitions at the beginning to remind you.



Colons

Where should the colons be in the following sentences to separate the two independent clauses?

He was late for school : his alarm clock hadn't gone off.

I have very little time to learn French : the school trip is in a few weeks.

You need to clean the fish tank out : the water is getting murky.

