

Other Punctuation: Semicolons, Colons, and Apostrophes
Rules &
Practice Exercises¹

SEMICOLONS

Rule 1: Use a semicolon to join main clauses.

Example: The complainant is a resident of Kampala; the police officer is a resident of Fort Portal.

Practice Exercises:

- A. This office cannot accept your complaint, we have brought it before the appropriate Ministry.
- B. This office cannot accept your complaint, however we have brought it before the appropriate Ministry.
- C. This office cannot accept your complaint but we have brought it before the appropriate Ministry.
- D. This office cannot accept your complaint, we have however brought it before the appropriate Ministry.

Rule 2: Use semicolons in a long or complex series.

Example: The Montana court has applied these definitions to cases with the following fact patterns: the driver was asleep and intoxicated; the driver was positioned behind the steering wheel; the vehicle's motor was running; and the vehicle was parked.

Practice Exercises:

- E. Unreasonable use includes uses not authorized by statute, uses not consistent with the character of the neighborhood, and uses not in the public interest.
- F. The prosecutor called the following witnesses: Linda Hastings, an advertising executive Samuel Hedges, an accountant, and Timothy Lesser, president of the company.

¹ Examples from *Just Writing* and *The Legal Writing Handbook* by Laurel Currie Oates and Anne Enquist.

COLONS

Use a colon to introduce a list or enumeration.

Example: The defendant is accused of assaulting the following victims: Agnes Miller, Denise Donovan, Ellie Ewing, and Christine Fremont.

Use a colon to indicate that an example, illustration, summary, elaboration, or explanation will follow.

Example: Mr. Baker had sustained personal property damage: his picture windows and valuable vase were smashed.

Use a colon to introduce a quotation when the quotation is longer than a single sentence or when it illustrates the point made in the lead-in clause.

Example: Her testimony was as follows: “My sister knew nothing about this. I didn’t even ask her to file the partnership papers.”

Practice Exercises:

- G. A two-part inquiry is used to determine reliability 1) was the confrontation procedure suggestive, and 2) was the identification reliable?

- H. In California, the service-oriented businesspersons subject to the bulk sales law are the baker, the café or restaurant owner, the garage owner, and the cleaner and dyer.

APOSTROPHES

Rule 2: Use 's to form the possessive of singular nouns, including those ending in s as long as the resulting word is not difficult to pronounce.

Example: The defendant's alibi

Rule 3: Use only the apostrophe to form the possessive of plural nouns ending in s.

Example: The partners' decision

Do NOT use an apostrophe to form the possessive of personal pronouns

Examples: His, hers, yours, ours, theirs

Practice Exercises:

- I. one judges error
- J. two judges error
- K. Lois complaint
- L. two weeks vacation

QUOTATION MARKS

Commas and periods go **INSIDE** closing quotation marks.

Semicolons and colons go **OUTSIDE** closing quotation marks.

Dashes, question marks, and exclamation points go **INSIDE** closing quotation marks when part of the quoted material and **OUTSIDE** closing quotation marks when they are part of the sentence as a whole.

When quoting something that has quotation marks in it, use single quotation marks within the quoted passage.

Examples: The judge ruled that “the conduct constituted sexual harassment.”

Although the conduct was deemed “unlawful,” the court ruled that the plaintiff suffered no damage.

The officers had no “reasonable, articulable suspicion”: the defendant’s conduct was consistent with innocent behavior.

Citing *Brandenburg*, the court concluded, “The defendant incited imminent lawless action when he ‘steeled and prepared’ his audience for action.”

Practice Exercises

- M. Davis employer described him as a “street-smart youngster who knew what not to get involved with”
- N. The jury could have arguably considered Wilson’s insulting remarks to Harris as “unlawful” thereby depriving Harris of her self-defense.
- O. Parole is a “variation on imprisonment” therefore parole and its possible revocation are a continuing form of custody relating back to the criminal act.
- P. “Police must discover incriminating evidence inadvertently,” the court noted, reasoning that “they may not know in advance the location of certain evidence and intend to seize it.” *Texas v. Brown*, [cite].

Answers to Practice Exercises

- A. This office cannot accept your complaint; we have brought it before the appropriate Ministry.
- B. This office cannot accept your complaint; however, we have brought it before the appropriate Ministry.

- C. This office cannot accept your complaint, but we have brought it before the appropriate Ministry.
- D. This office cannot accept your complaint; we have, however, brought it before the appropriate Ministry.
- E. Unreasonable use includes uses not authorized by statute; uses not consistent with the character of the neighborhood; and uses not in the public interest.
- F. The prosecutor called the following witnesses: Linda Hastings, an advertising executive; Samuel Hedges, an accountant; and Timothy Lesser, president of the company.
- G. A two-part inquiry is used to determine reliability: 1) was the confrontation procedure suggestive, and 2) was the identification reliable?
- H. In California, the service-oriented businesspersons subject to the bulk sales law are the baker, the café or restaurant owner, the garage owner, and the cleaner and dyer. (**No change.**)
- I. one judge's error
- J. two judges' error
- K. Lois's complaint
- L. two weeks' vacation
- M. Davis's employer described him as a "street-smart youngster who knew what not to get involved with."
- N. The jury could have arguably considered Wilson's insulting remarks to Harris as "unlawful," thereby depriving Harris of her self-defense.
- O. Parole is a "variation on imprisonment" ; therefore, parole and its possible revocation are a continuing form of custody relating back to the criminal act.
- P. "Police must discover incriminating evidence 'inadvertently,'" the court noted, reasoning that "they may not 'know in advance the location of certain evidence and intend to seize it. '" *Texas v. Brown*, [cite].