

# OTHER PUNCTUATION: Colons, Semicolons, Apostrophes, Quotes



**LEGAL WRITING CLINIC**  
Kate Stoker

# OTHER PUNCTUATION: Colons, Semicolons, Apostrophes, Quotes



See pages 230-47 in *Just Writing*,  
by Anne Enquist &  
Laurel Currie Oates

# Agenda for Today

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Semicolons

Colons

Apostrophes

Quotation Marks

# Semicolons

## Rule 1: Use a semicolon to join main clauses

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The most common use of the semicolon is to separate closely related main, or independent, clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction.

\_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_ .  
main clause                      main clause

# Remember:

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- A main clause contains a subject and a verb.
- A main clause can stand alone as a sentence.



# Some common conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases:

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- However
- Thus
- Therefore
- Moreover
- Hence
- Accordingly

# Also remember:

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- There are seven coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS)
- If one of the FANBOYS conjunctions connects two main clauses, **use a comma**, not a semicolon.



# Example:

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

A. The complainant is a resident of Kampala, but the police officer is a resident of Fort Portal.

# Example:

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B. The letter should be sent to the complainant; a copy of the report should be sent to the investigator.

B. The letter should be sent to the complainant, and a copy of the report should be sent to the investigator.

# Be careful:

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The same conjunctive adverbs and transitions may also occur in the middle of a main clause. In such cases, they are preceded and followed by a comma.

\_\_\_\_\_ , however , \_\_\_\_\_ .  
main clause

# Example:

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The motor was not running, however, because of a problem with the distributor cap.

BUT:

The motor was not running; however, the radio was on.

Practice: Add or correct semicolons and commas as needed.

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

Practice: Add or correct semicolons and commas as needed.

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

Practice: Add or correct semicolons and commas as needed.

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

## Practice: Add or correct semicolons and commas as needed

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



# Semicolons

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

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Use semicolons to separate items in a series if:

-the items are long

or

-one or more of the items has internal commas.

Typically, series are separated by commas:

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item 1, item 2, and item 3

However, series with long items are separated by semicolons:

item 1 ; item 2 ;  
and item 3

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In addition, series with internal commas in one or more items are separated by semicolons:

\_\_\_\_\_ item 1, \_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_, item 2, \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
and \_\_\_\_\_ item 3 \_\_\_\_\_

# Example: Series of Long Items

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- 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.

# Example: Series with Internal Commas

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- She testified that the silent partners were Lionel Strong, her brother, of Tacoma, Washington; Helen Parks, whose last address was Oakland, California; and Robert Davis, who moved to Houston, Texas.

# Add semicolons where necessary:

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- 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.
- 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.

# Add semicolons where necessary:

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- F. The prosecutor called the following witnesses: Linda Hastings, an advertising executive, Samuel Hedges, an accountant, and Timothy Lesser, president of the company.
- F. The prosecutor called the following witnesses: Linda Hastings, an advertising executive; Samuel Hedges, an accountant; and Timothy Lesser, president of the company.

# Colons: Lists and Enumerations

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Use a colon to introduce a list or enumeration.

Make sure the part of the sentence preceding the colon is grammatically complete.



# Examples:

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- The defendant is accused of assaulting the following victims: Agnes Miller, Denise Donovan, Ellie Ewing, and Christine Fremont.
- There are seven coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

# Be careful:

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- ❑ Do **not** use a colon between a verb or preposition and its object.
- ❑ Incorrect: My silent partners are: Lionel Strong, Helen Parks, and Robert Davis.
- ❑ Correct: My silent partners are as follows: Lionel Strong, Helen Parks, and Robert Davis.

# Colons: Other Uses

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

# Examples:

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- She had a silent partner: her brother.
- Mr. Baker had sustained personal property damage: his picture windows and valuable vase were smashed.
- The report is measured and straightforward: it shows that the commission is committed to preservation of historic landmarks.

# Colons: Introducing Quotations

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- 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.

# Examples:

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- Her testimony was as follows: “My sister knew nothing about this. I didn’t even ask her to file the partnership papers.”
- She testified about her silent partner: “My brother has been involved from the beginning.”

# Practice:

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

# Practice:

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- 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.
- 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)**



# Apostrophes: Forming Possessives of Singular Nouns

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## **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.

Note: Use the apostrophe without the "s" if it creates three "s" sounds together.

# Examples:

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- The defendant's alibi
- The expert's testimony
- James's contract
- Congress's authority

BUT

- Alexis' satisfaction

# Forming Possessives of Plural Nouns

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## **Rule 3**

Use only the apostrophe to form the possessive of plural nouns ending in "s."

- Examples:
  - The partners' decision
  - Thirty days' notice

# Forming Possessives of Personal Pronouns

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- ❑ **Do not** use an apostrophe to form the possessive of personal pronouns.
- ❑ Examples:
  - hers
  - ours
  - theirs
  - yours
  - whose
  - its

**Memory Cue: They are *already* possessive, so I don't need an apostrophe.**

# Its v. it's

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- its = possessive of it
- it's = it is
- its' = incorrect

# Practice: Add apostrophes as needed

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

# Quotation Marks

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- ❑ 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 they are part of the quoted material and outside closing quotation marks when they are part of the sentence as a whole.

# Quotation Marks

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- If you want to quote something that already has quotation marks in it, use single quotation marks within the quoted passage.



# Examples:

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- The judge ruled that “the conduct constituted sexual harassment.”
- Although the conduct was deemed “unlawful,” the court ruled that the plaintiff suffered no damage.

# Examples:

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- The officers had no “reasonable, articulable suspicion”: the defendant’s conduct was consistent with innocent behavior.
- The defendant claimed to be “brainwashed”; therefore, she did not have the requisite mental state to be guilty of murder.
- Citing *Brandenburg*, the court concluded, “The defendant incited imminent lawless action when he ‘stepped and prepared’ his audience for action.”

# Practice: Put in the proper punctuation.

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M. Davis employer described him as a “street-smart youngster who knew what not to get involved with”

M. Davis’s employer described him as a “street-smart youngster who knew what not to get involved with.”

# Practice: Put in the proper punctuation.

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- N. The jury could have arguably considered Wilson's insulting remarks to Harris as "unlawful" thereby depriving Harris of her self-defense.
- N. The jury could have arguably considered Wilson's insulting remarks to Harris as "unlawful," thereby depriving Harris of her self-defense.

# Practice: Put in the proper punctuation.

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- 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.
- 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.

# Practice: Put in the proper punctuation.

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- 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].
- 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].

# Thanks for coming!

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