SEMICOLONS

**Semicolons in Compound Sentences**

Semicolons are most often used to connect two independent clauses (full sentences) that are related in meaning. Both the words before the semicolon and the words after it must be complete sentences that could be separated with a period.

* We could go fishing on Saturday. You could borrow a pole from my neighbor.
* We could go fishing on Saturday; you could borrow a pole from my neighbor.

Using a semicolon to connect two independent clauses creates what's called a compound sentence. If you don't want to use a semicolon, you could also use a comma and the words and, but, or, or so to connect your original two sentences. If you use "however" or moreover" to connect your ideas, you need to use a semicolon in front of it and a comma after it.

* The course is hard, but the teacher is pretty funny.
* The course is hard; however, the teacher is pretty funny.

Using a semicolon instead of a period lets you emphasize the connection between your original two sentences and also lets you vary the structure of your sentences, making your paragraphs easier for someone else to read.

**Semicolons with Commas in a Series**

Less often, you'll need a semicolon to separate items in a series. Ordinarily, of course, you can just use commas:

* He's taking algebra, biology, and drama.

But when the series you're writing about already contains commas of its own, adding more commas can confuse your readers.

1. He's taking algebra, which he's good at, biology, his least favorite subject, and drama, for fun.

1. On the table were three piles: meat, chicken and fish, rice, bread, and pasta, and spinach, broccoli, and kale.

To make your list clearer, therefore, use commas instead of semicolons to mark off its major sections

1. He's taking algebra, which he's good at; biology, his least favorite subject; and drama, for fun.
2. On the table were three piles: meat, chicken and fish; rice, bread, and pasta; and spinach, broccoli, and kale.

**Misuses of the Semicolon**

Because a semicolon can only separate independent clauses, it cannot be used when the words before or after it cannot stand alone as a sentence.

* (wrong) Driving to school; I saw the accident.
* (wrong) You’ll do well on your speech; because you practiced so carefully.

As a general rule, you may not want to use more than one semicolon in any paragraph. Avoid using two semicolons to connect three sentences.

**Practice**

Insert any semicolons or commas needed in the following sentences.

1. He slept through his alarm luckily his first class was cancelled.

2. Tripping over the dog, I dropped my cup.

3. We practiced every day after school and all Saturday however we lost the game.

4. We baked six dozen cookies knowing that they always sell out fast.

5. At Halloween we gave out Reese's, Snickers, and Crunch bars, gumballs, caramels, and taffy, and apples and candy corn.

6. She's a little bit country, he's a little bit rock 'n roll.

7. You'll need to turn left on Cedar it's the third house on the right.

8. The rent is expensive moreover the house is pretty small.

9. I didn't study for the test I didn't have my notes having left them in the classroom.

10. Sam went skiing Terry however went snowboarding.

1. **Semicolon or Comma?**

Directions: determine whether the clauses need to be joined with commas or semicolons. Put the proper punctuation on the blank.

1. The artist preferred to paint in oils \_\_\_\_ he did not like water colors.

2. Even when the house looks clean \_\_\_\_ there is usually a bunch of dirt swept under the rug.

3. I’m going to leave early today \_\_\_\_ unless the boss comes back from the meeting.

4. The computer can perform many calculations at once \_\_\_\_ however, it cannot reason at all.

5. In the first place, it was snowing too hard to see the road \_\_\_\_ in the second place, we had no chains.

6. Italy is my favorite foreign country \_\_\_\_ in fact, I plan on staying there for three weeks this summer.

7. The challenges are not impossible \_\_\_ but they are very hard to clear.

8. I’m going to do all of my English homework every night \_\_\_\_ because that’s how you get an “A”.

9. If he misses his appointment \_\_\_\_ he’ll have to wait another six months to see the dentist.

10. There are many negative side effects to smoking \_\_\_ there are no positive side effects from smoking.

1. **Give it a shot: Write six ORIGINAL sentences that correctly use a semicolon.**
2. **Comma or Semicolon**

Directions: Determine whether each sentence needs a comma or semicolon. Put the correct punctuation mark on the line. Then explain why that punctuation mark best completes the sentence.

1. When the islanders started fighting amongst themselves \_\_\_\_\_ the monkeys took control. **Why?**

2. The islanders were weary of fighting \_\_\_\_\_ consequently, the monkeys faced little resistance.

**Why?**

3. As soon as the monkeys were in charge of Fire Island \_\_\_\_\_ things began to change. **Why?**

4. David was afraid of Tiny, the leader of the monkeys \_\_\_\_\_ because David had heard things. **Why?**

5. Tiny demanded all kinds of crazy things from the islanders \_\_\_\_\_ this troubled them greatly. **Why?**

6. One warm summer morning \_\_\_\_\_ Tiny marched to the village square and pronounced a new law. **Why?**

7. This law shocked and appalled the islanders \_\_\_\_\_ they could not accept such ridiculous leadership. **Why?**

8. After much hemming and hawing \_\_\_\_\_ the elders decided to accept the law afterall. **Why?**

9. The islanders had lost their spirit for fighting \_\_\_\_\_ furthermore, no one wanted to provoke Tiny's ire. **Why?**

10. David \_\_\_\_\_ however, had had enough. **Why?**

11. David was offended by Tiny's law \_\_\_\_\_ he didn't want to eat his shoes or wear tacos on his feet.

**Why?**

12. Whenever David thought of Tiny, the monkeys, and what had happened \_\_\_\_\_ his blood boiled.

**Why?**

13. David decided that he would form a resistance \_\_\_\_\_ he would gather the town's strongest warriors. **Why?**

14. David talked to Hugo \_\_\_\_\_ the strongest man in town, and Hugo couldn't wait to help. **Why?**

15. Hugo led David to Katrina, the fan-dancer from the parlor \_\_\_\_\_ she was excited to join the effort. **Why?**

16. Katrina introduced David to Bruno, the rock thrower \_\_\_\_\_ and Bruno was ready for action too. **Why?**

17. Now that David's team was assembled \_\_\_\_\_ it was time for them to take down the monkeys. **Why?**

18. Katrina lured the monkeys into a pit, Hugo trapped them \_\_\_\_\_ and Bruno crushed them with a rock. **Why?**

19. David was happy that Tiny escaped \_\_\_\_\_ David wanted Tiny for himself. **Why?**

20. David was wearing taco shoes when he jump kicked Tiny \_\_\_\_\_ however, the irony went unnoticed.

**Why?**

**Compound Subject and Predicate Commas**

1. Re-write each sentence on the lines below. Add commas to the compound subject of each sentence.

Example:

* Jeremy Stan and Ivan walked home from school.
* Jeremy, Stan and Ivan walked home from school.

1. David Leo and Jonathan walked to the park after school.

2. Hunters fishers and pilots need a license.

3. Susan Shelley and Sarah went shopping at the mall.

1. Add commas to the compound predicate of each sentence.

Example:

* I ran to the beach park and shopping center.
* I ran to the beach, park, and shopping center.

1. We went to look at the zebras lions and alligators.

2. I bought shoes socks and basketball shorts.

3. My best friends are Sarah Amy and Christina.

4. We walked to the bookstore sporting goods store and clothing outlet.

**Major Comma Uses**

Directions: Rewrite the below sentences, placing commas as needed. NOTE: some sentences are not compound sentences and, thus, require no commas.

1. You must go immediately or you will not get a place in the class.

2. I am copying this recipe for I want to make this dish someday.

3. Harold fed the cats and walked the dog.

4. He will be elected tomorrow and he will be a good leader.

5. This class is exciting but it is hard.

6. No students stood in line so Mary walked straight to the registration table.

7. She is a woman of great courage and the town will honor her today.

8. The band and the cheerleaders gave the team plenty of support.

9. The coat was lovely yet it was not the coat she wanted.

10. John traveled to France and then to Spain.

11. Because she did not consult her calendar Merrill missed her date.

12. I am copying this recipe for I want to make this dish someday.

13. To earn an “A” in Dr. Long’s course one must work very hard.

14. After many days at the mine the workers were tired and angry.

15. As though nothing had happened she sat down comfortably.

16. Unless fiscal policies are changed the country will face a depression.

17. To get to my house make a right hand turn.

18. Before the war and bloodshed in that country the people were happy.

19. When Harriet finished the book she gave it to Harry.

20. Harriet gave the book to Harry when she finished it.

21. Recognizing the thief the policemen arrested him immediately.

22. The student who writes the best paper will receive the best grade.

23. Elias Moxley a famous trial lawyer will represent Ms.Tishman.