12.5 Using Semicolons and Colons (pages 256-258)

**Rule 1**: Use a semicolon to join the main clauses of a compound sentence if they’re not joined by a conjunction such as *and, but, or, nor,* or *for.*

Example: The electric car was once the most popular car in the United States; people liked electric cars because they were clean and quiet.

(This rule is a review from grammar chapter 1 when we discussed types of sentences. If you remember correctly, when we discussed creating compound sentences, you learned that you could join two simple sentences with either a comma and a coordinating conjunction, or with a semicolon. This rule shows the semicolon joining together what could be two simple sentences.)

**Rule 2:** Use a semicolon to join the main clauses of a compound sentence if they’re long and if they already contain commas. Use a semicolon even if the clauses are joined by a coordinating conjunction such as *and, but or nor,* or *for.*

Example: Before the invention of the automobile, people rode horses, bikes, or streetcars for short distances; and they used horse-drawn carriage, trains, or boats for longer trips.

(This rule is similar to what we discussed in chapter 1 with joining together simple sentences. However, in this example the sentences that are joined together were longer and included commas. Since there are already so many commas in this example, you should use a semicolon with the coordinating conjunction instead of a comma.)

**Rule 3:** Use a semicolon to join the main clauses of joined by a word such as *consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless,* or *therefore.*

Example: I started my homework immediately after school; consequently, I finished before dinner.

**Rule 4:** Use a colon to introduce a list of items that ends a sentence. Use a word such as *these, the following,* or *as follows* before the list.

Example: I’ll need these supplies for my project: newspapers, flour, water, string, and paint.

Don’t use a colon immediately after a verb or preposition (such as *include* or *to)*

Example: I sent a message to Grandma, Aunt Rita, and Julie.

**Rule 5:** Use a colon to separate the hour and minutes when you use numerals to write the time of day.

Example: The train left the station at 10:17 A.M. and arrived in the city at 12:33 P.M.

**Rule 6:** Use a colon after the salutation of a business letter.

Example: Dear Professor Sanchez: Dear Editor in Chief:

(This rule is related to the comma rule we discussed in the last lesson. You would use a comma if you are sending a friendly letter to someone you know on a personal level, but you use a colon after the salutation of a business letter if it is someone you know professionally or don’t know very well.)