

Punctuation

17th Lecture

Eat children.

Eat, children.

The Types of Commas:

(1) Introducer Commas

Therefore, I plan to quit smoking.

Nervously, I threw away my cigarettes.

As a result, I feel terrible right now.

After 16 years of smoking, it is not easy to quit.

Having smoked for 16 years, I find it difficult to quit.

(2) Inserter Commas

My uncle, **however,** refuses to quit smoking.

My father, **on the other hand,** has never smoked.

There is no point in living, **according to my uncle,** if you do not do what you enjoy.

(3) Coordinator Commas

She has a good job, yet she is always broke.

They were tired, so they went home early.

He does not enjoy skiing, ice-skating, or sledding.

Cecille speaks English, Spanish, French, and Creole.

(4) Tag Commas

My uncle believes in drinking a daily glass of wine, too.³

He appears to be in good health, however.

He swims for an hour every day, for example.

He also plays tennis, beating me most of the time.

It is not logical, is it?

Using **semicolons** is not difficult if you remember that a semicolon (;) is more like a period than a comma. It is a very strong punctuation mark. Semicolons are used in three places:

1. Between two sentences that are closely connected in idea
2. Before conjunctive adverbs and some transition phrases when they are followed by an independent clause
3. Between items in a series when the items themselves contain commas

Andrew did not accept the job offer; he wants to go to graduate school.
Computer use is increasing; computer crime is, too.
The meeting ended at dawn; nothing had been decided.

Skiing is dangerous; nevertheless, millions of people ski.
I have never been to Asia; in fact, I have never been outside the country.

I cannot decide which car I like best: the Ferrari, with its quick acceleration and sporty look; the midsize Ford Taurus, with its comfortable seats and ease of handling; or the compact Geo, with its economical fuel consumption.

Using a **colon** at the end of an independent clause focuses attention on the words following the colon. After a colon, we often write lists, appositives, and direct quotations.

I need the following groceries: eggs, milk, and coffee.

Caution

1. Do not use a colon to introduce a list after the verb *to be* unless you add *the following* or *as follows*.

★ To me, the most important things in life are: good health, a happy home life, and a satisfying occupation.

To me, the most important things in life **are** good health, a happy home life, and a satisfying occupation.

To me, the most important things in life **are the following:** good health, a happy home life, and a satisfying occupation.

2. Do not use a colon after a preposition. Use a colon only at the end of an independent clause.

★ After a long day at work, I look forward to: enjoying a quiet dinner at home, playing with my children, and watching a little TV.

After a long day at work, I look forward to enjoying a quiet dinner at home, playing with my children, and watching a little TV.