**Semicolons;**

Learn how to use semicolons; therefore, your sentence variety will improve.

**Independent Clauses** A semicolon can be used by itself to connect closely related sentences.

I cannot eat strawberries**;** they give me a rash.

The nurse will see you now**;** the doctor will see you later.

**Adverbial Conjunction or Transitional Phrase** A semicolon can be used with an adverbial conjunction or transitional phrase to connect closely related sentences:

He studied hard**;** therefore, he earns excellent grades.

He studied hard**;** as a result, he earns excellent grades.

**Commonly used adverbial conjunctions or transitions:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hence | Consequently | Thus | Then |
| Indeed | Moreover | Furthermore | Accordingly |
| However | Nevertheless | Also | For example |
| For instance | In particular | At the same time | To illustrate |
| In other words | Without a doubt | For instance | On the other hand |

Instead of using a semicolon in the examples, the writer could have used a period and a capital letter:

I cannot eat strawberries. They give me a rash.

He studies hard. Therefore, he earns excellent grades.

**Interrupters** Always be alert for conjunctive adverbs or transitional phrases which are used as interrupters instead of as sentence connectors. Use commas with interrupters.

No one I know, however, is going to the party.

I am, without a doubt, going to change my grip the next time I play golf.

*(Independent clauses with semicolons and interrupters with commas)*

She works too hard**;** one of these days, therefore, I think she’s going to collapse.

I am angry about the changes**;** I will, nevertheless, try to follow the new rules.

***Tip*:**  Beware of the word “however.” It is sometimes used as a regular adverb and, therefore, does not require any commas:

Arrange your vacation however you like.

**Coordinating Conjunctions:** Another use for the semicolon is to connect sentences with coordinate conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) if one or more of the sentences contain a comma or commas.

Jane wanted to be a surgeon**;** but she learned from her doctor, who had been in practice for many years, that to reach her goal would require great ambition.

**Separation of Items:** Semicolons may be used to separate items in a series when they are unusually long or contain internal punctuation.

I am currently taking Spanish, which I enjoy**;** math, which I find difficult**;** and psychology, which is my favorite subject.

The following people were invited: Tim, my cousin**;** Erik, a good friend**;** Sandy, a neighbor**;** and Belinda, my sister-in-law.

***Tip*:** Look for semicolons in your reading and for ways to use them in your writing to improve your sentence variety.

**Test your knowledge! Add semicolons and/or commas to the following sentences:**

1. My tutor is excellent however sometimes I wish we had more time.

2. My tutor is excellent I wish we had more time.

3. I have several favorite athletes: in basketball Bill Russell in baseball Hank Aaron in tennis

Serena Williams and in boxing Muhammad Ali.

4. I am really disappointed with my essay therefore I am going to start over with a new topic.

5. I understand the problem nevertheless I can’t seem to solve it however hard I try.

6. The crowd was too rowdy the band as a result quit playing and walked off the stage.

7. The crowd was too rowdy as a result the band quit playing and walked off the stage.

8. I will talk to the class first the tutor will then give a short presentation.

9. I will talk to the class first then the tutor will give a short presentation.

10. As a matter of fact I am too tired to think right now but if I take a short nap I expect to be

able to finish my homework before midnight.