

AFTER SUCH AS OR LIKE

- ▶ Many shade-loving plants, such as/like begonias, impatiens, and coleus, can add color to a shady garden.

BEFORE THAN

- ▶ Touring Crete was more thrilling for us/than visiting the Greek islands frequented by rich Europeans.

AFTER ALTHOUGH

- ▶ Although/ the air was balmy, the water was too cold for swimming.

BEFORE A PARENTHESIS

- ▶ At MCI Sylvia began at the bottom/ (with only three and a half walls and a swivel chair), but within five years she had been promoted to supervisor.

TO SET OFF AN INDIRECT (REPORTED) QUOTATION

- ▶ Samuel Goldwyn once said/ that a verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.

WITH A QUESTION MARK OR AN EXCLAMATION POINT

- ▶ "Why don't you try it?" she coaxed. "You can't do any worse than the rest of us."

EXERCISE 33-1

Delete commas where necessary in the following sentences. If a sentence is correct, write "correct" after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

Lorita Lynn has paved the way for artists such / Shania Twain and the Dixie Chicks.

- As a child growing up in Jamaica, I often daydreamed about life in the United States.
- He wore a thick, black, wool coat over army fatigues.
- Often public figures, (Greta Garbo was a good example) go to great lengths to guard their private lives.
- She loved early spring flowers such as, crocuses, daffodils, forsythia, and iris.
- On Pam's wrist, was a tattoo of a dragon chasing a tiger.
- Mesquite, the hardest of the softwoods, grows primarily in the Southwest.
- Male supremacy was assumed by my father, and accepted by my mother.
- The lieutenant reported to his captain, that all of his men were present and accounted for.
- The streets that three hours later would be bumper to bumper with commuters, were quiet and empty except for a few prowling cats.
- Most of the citizens in the United States, expect their elected officials to be truthful.

ON THE WEB

For an electronic exercise on the use and misuse of commas, go to dianahacker.com/rules and click on

- ▶ Electronic Grammar Exercises
- ▶ Punctuation
- ▶ E-ex 33-1

34**The semicolon**

The semicolon is used to connect major sentence elements of equal grammatical rank.

GRAMMAR CHECKERS flag some, but not all, misused semicolons (34d). In addition, they can alert you to some run-on sentences (34a). However, they miss more run-on sentences than they identify, and they sometimes flag correct sentences as possible run-ons. (See also the grammar checker advice on p. 166.)

34a Use a semicolon between closely related independent clauses not joined with a coordinating conjunction.

When related independent clauses appear in one sentence, they are ordinarily linked with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, *yet*). The coordinating conjunction signals the relation between the clauses. If the clauses are closely related and the relation is clear without a conjunction, they may be linked with a semicolon instead.

Injustice is relatively easy to bear: what stings is justice.

—H. L. Mencken

A semicolon must be used whenever a coordinating conjunction has been omitted between independent clauses. To use merely a comma creates a kind of run-on sentence known as a comma splice. (See 20.)

- ▶ In 1800, a traveler needed six weeks to get from New York City to Chicago; in 1860, the trip by railroad took only two days.

CAUTION: Do not overuse the semicolon as a means of revising run-on sentences. For other revision strategies, see 20a, 20c, and 20d.

34b Use a semicolon between independent clauses linked with a transitional expression.

Transitional expressions include conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases.

CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

accordingly	indeed	subsequently
also	instead	then
anyway	likewise	therefore
besides	meanwhile	thus
certainly	moreover	
consequently	nevertheless	
conversely	next	
finally	nonetheless	
furthermore	otherwise	
hence	similarly	
however	specifically	
incidentally	still	

TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

after all	even so	in fact
as a matter of fact	for example	in other words
as a result	for instance	in the first place
at any rate	in addition	on the contrary
at the same time	in conclusion	on the other hand

When a transitional expression appears between two independent clauses, it is preceded by a semicolon and usually followed by a comma.

- ▶ Many corals grow very gradually; in fact, the creation of a coral reef can take centuries.

When a transitional expression appears in the middle of the second independent clause, the semicolon goes between the clauses.

- ▶ Most singers gain fame through hard work and dedication; Evita, however, found other means.

Transitional expressions should not be confused with the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*, which are preceded by a comma when they link independent clauses. (See 32a.)

34C Use a semicolon between items in a series containing internal punctuation.

- Classic science fiction sagas are *Star Trek*, with Mr. Spock and his large pointed ears; *Battlestar Galactica*, with its Cylon Raiders; and *Star Wars*, with Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and Darth Vader.

Without the semicolons, the reader would have to sort out the major groupings, distinguishing between important and less important pauses according to the logic of the sentence. By inserting semicolons at the major breaks, the writer does this work for the reader.

34d Avoid common misuses of the semicolon.

Do not use a semicolon in the following situations.

- **BETWEEN A SUBORDINATE CLAUSE AND THE REST OF THE SENTENCE**
Unless you brush your teeth within ten or fifteen minutes after eating, brushing does almost no good.
- **BETWEEN AN APPOSITIVE AND THE WORD IT REFERS TO**
The scientists were fascinated by the species *Argyroneta aquatica*, a spider that lives underwater.
- **TO INTRODUCE A LIST**
Some of my favorite film stars have home pages on the Web; John Travolta, Susan Sarandon, and Leonardo DiCaprio.

BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES JOINED BY AND, BUT, OR, NOR, FOR, SO, OR YET

- Five of the applicants had worked with spreadsheets, but only one was familiar with database management.

EXCEPTIONS: If at least one of the independent clauses contains internal punctuation, you may use a semicolon even though the clauses are joined with a coordinating conjunction.

As a vehicle [the model T] was hard-working, commonplace, and heroic; and it often seemed to transmit those qualities to the person who rode in it.

— E. B. White

Although a comma would also be correct in this sentence, the semicolon is more effective, for it indicates the relative weights of the pauses.

Occasionally, a semicolon may be used to emphasize a sharp contrast or a firm distinction between clauses joined with a coordinating conjunction.

We hate some persons because we do not know them; and we will not know them because we hate them.

— Charles Caleb Colton

EXERCISE 34-1

Add commas or semicolons where needed in the following quotations. If a sentence is correct, write "correct" after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

- If an animal does something, we call it insti[^]ncy; if we do the same thi[^]ng, we call it intelligence. — Will Cuppy
- a. Do not ask me to be kind just ask me to act as though I were. — Jules Renard
- b. When men talk about defense they always claim to be protecting women and children but they never ask the women and children what they think. — Pat Schroeder
- c. When I get a little money I buy books if any is left I buy food and clothes. — Desiderius Erasmus
- d. America is a country that doesn't know where it is going but is determined to set a speed record getting there. — Lawrence J. Peter