**Semicolons**

Semicolons act as periods, but they establish relationships between two independent clauses (complete sentences) that are **much more closely related** than normal sentences. If periods go between sentences that are in the same family, semicolons go between twins.

A useful way to check if a semicolon is appropriate is to see if the ideas on each side of the semicolon point to each other.

**Example:** John never says please; Jane always does.
Note how the ideas on each side of the semicolon (saying please) speak to each other.

**When To Use Semicolons**

There are primarily two instances in which you should use a semicolon:

1. To separate **closely related** independent clauses.
   **Example:** Travis Piazza is my friend; George Anderson isn’t.

2. Before **conjunctive adverbs** that connect independent clauses.
   **Example:** We didn’t study; instead, we watched movies and ordered Dominos.

**Examples of conjunctive adverbs:** accordingly, furthermore, moreover, similarly, also, hence, namely, still, anyway, however, nevertheless, then, besides, incidentally, thereafter, certainly, indeed, nonetheless, therefore, consequently, instead, now, thus, likewise, otherwise, undoubtedly, and meanwhile.

**Semicolon Use**

1. Ingrid is nice; my father is nicer. CORRECT (very close relationship)

2. During the summer; Kirby studies. INCORRECT (fragment)

3. Today is Saturday; I love summer vacation. INCORRECT (no close relationship)

4. Yesterday, during the morning; I ate breakfast. INCORRECT (during...=fragment)

5. Ackerman is a good man; his mother is fifty years old. INCORRECT (no close relationship)
Exercise on Semicolon Use

Directions: Choose the letter that corresponds to the correct answer.

1. My brother is a great guy; my cousin is not.
   A. Change the semicolon to a comma
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

2. Brightly-colored snakes tend to be venomous; some snakes live in the water.
   A. Change the semicolon to a period because the independent clauses aren’t closely related
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

3. The ancient Egyptians advanced our understanding of math; the ancient Greeks advanced our knowledge of philosophy.
   A. Change the semicolon to a comma
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

4. Insulation keeps houses cooler in the summer and; warmer in the winter
   A. Delete the semicolon
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

5. I love partying on Thursdays because; the bars are less crowded.
   A. Delete the semicolon because it creates a fragment
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

6. Some people respond to my emails; others do not.
   A. Change the semicolon to a period
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

7. If you want to do well on the test, study; every night and visit the professor during office hours.
   A. Delete the semicolon because it creates a fragment
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

8. In the winter; I love to drink hot chocolate and to eat warm pudding.
   A. Delete the semicolon because it creates a fragment
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

9. Writing essays is very difficult; my sister is a good student.
   A. Change the semicolon to a since the ideas are not very closely related.
B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon between closely-related independent clauses

10. I don’t think he meant to hurt your feelings; however, I do think he can be cruel at times.
   A. Change the semicolon to a comma
   B. Sentence correctly uses a semicolon before an adverb that joins independent clauses

Semicolon Exercise 2

For the online version of this exercise, go to
http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/semicolons_ex1.htm

Instructions

Semicolons act as periods: you need a full sentence on both sides of a semicolon. A semicolon belongs in each of the following sentences. Determine where the semicolon belongs. Then select the word that comes just before the semicolon.

Questions

1. It is raining outside I will bring my umbrella with me.
   a.) raining
   b.) outside
   c.) umbrella

2. Hopefully, the weather will change soon otherwise, the whole summer will go by without the sun shining.
   a.) soon
   b.) otherwise
   c.) summer

3. She doesn't understand algebra therefore, she will probably not pass the math final.
   a.) understand
   b.) algebra
   c.) therefore

4. We will play tennis tomorrow then we will go out for dinner.
   a.) play
   b.) tennis
   c.) tomorrow
5. She had very high grades in high school she applied to Harvard University.
   a.) grades
   b.) school
   c.) applied

6. Some colleges offer full time scholarships others do not.
   a.) colleges
   b.) time
   c.) scholarships

7. There is a lot of financial aid available you just have to know where to look for it.
   a.) lot
   b.) aid
   c.) available

8. Some institutions require a lot of financial support from parents some require only a little.
   a.) support
   b.) parents
   c.) require

9. You should always choose a college according to whether you believe you'll be happy you're the one who will be attending for four years.
   a.) college
   b.) believe
   c.) happy

10. It's such a beautiful day I will walk in Niagara Falls.
    a.) beautiful
    b.) day
    c.) walk
Semicolon Exercise 3

For the online version of this exercise, go to http://depts.dvc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/semicolons_ex2.htm

Instructions

Each of the following sentences may or may not contain a semicolon. Determine if a semicolon is needed. If it is, select the word that comes just before the semicolon.

Questions

1. He wanted to take a walk, so we drove to Niagara Falls and walked around the park.
   a.) walk
   b.) Falls
   c.) no semicolon

2. She did the laundry she used the last of the laundry detergent.
   a.) laundry
   b.) up
   c.) no semicolon

3. They both went swimming while they were on vacation in Mexico.
   a.) swimming
   b.) vacation
   c.) no semicolon

4. They finished digging in the garden and planting flowers it looked beautiful.
   a.) garden
   b.) flowers
   c.) no semicolon

5. To build the fence around the garden, they needed to dig trenches close to seven feet deep.
   a.) garden
   b.) trenches
   c.) no semicolon

6. The garden contained vegetables they will harvest them in fall.
   a.) vegetables
7. Their house and garden are extremely important to them that's why they take care of their property so well.
   a.) garden
   b.) them
   c.) no semicolon

8. When planting impatiens, it's important to plant some in the sun and some in the shade because it's hard to tell how much of each needs.
   a.) sun
   b.) shade
   c.) no semicolon

9. All of the garden tools are kept in the garage they are cleaned every spring.
   a.) tools
   b.) garage
   c.) no semicolon

10. My favorite flower is forget-me-nots even though some people consider it a weed.
    a.) forget-me-nots
    b.) though
    c.) no semicolon