

#9994

PUNCTUATION: PROGRAM 8--THE SEMICOLON, COLON, AND DASH

FILMS FOR THE HUMANITIES & SCIENCES, 2000 Grade Level: 8-13+

22 mins.

DESCRIPTION

How does a writer use a semicolon, colon, or dash? A semicolon is a bridge that joins two independent clauses with the same basic idea or joins phrases in a series. To elaborate a sentence with further information, use a colon to imply "and here it is!" The dash has no specific rules for use; it generally introduces some dramatic element into the sentence or interrupts its smooth flow. Clear examples given.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Language Arts-Writing

- Standard: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
 - Benchmark: Uses conventions of punctuation in written compositions (e.g., uses commas with nonrestrictive clauses and contrasting expressions, uses quotation marks with ending punctuation, uses colons before extended quotations, uses hyphens for compound adjectives, uses semicolons between independent clauses, uses dashes to break continuity of thought) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1-4.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

- 1. To explain the proper use of a semicolon to combine independent clauses and in lists with commas.
- 2. To show the correct use of colons for combining information and in sentence fragments.
- 3. To illustrate the use of a dash in sentences.
- 4. To show some misuses of the semicolon, colon, and dash.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The semicolon, colon, and dash are among the punctuation marks most neglected by students and, sad to say, teachers. However, professional writers—and proficient writers in business—use them all to good effect. It's been theorized that the comma splice, rather than revealing students' inability to recognize a complete

Captioned Media Program

sentence, merely reveals their ignorance of the semicolon. Nevertheless, once students are introduced to the semicolon as a corrective to the comma splice, they often have a tendency to use them to replace commas in other situations where the comma is the correct mark (an example of the common linguistic error known as overcompensation).

VOCABULARY

- 1. balanced ideas
- 2. colon
- 3. compound sentence
- 4. dash
- 5. dependent clause
- 6. elaborate
- 7. furthermore
- 8. implied meaning

- 9. independent clause
- 10. permitted fragments
- 11. phrases
- 12. related ideas
- 13. semicolon
- 14. sentence fragment
- 15. subordinating conjunction
- 16. zinger

BEFORE SHOWING

- 1. Show the punctuation marks semicolon, colon, and dash. Share personal knowledge of all the different ways they can be used. Record any questions about their use.
- 2. Watch the previous video in this series: *Punctuation: Program 10—The Wily Comma*, CMP #9995. Discuss. Be sure to inform the students that the semicolon, colon, and dash are easier to use correctly.

DURING SHOWING

- 1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
- 2. Consider pausing the video to discuss and review in between each of the punctuation mark sections.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

- 1. What kind of clauses can you use a semicolon with to create a big compound sentence? What does it mean to have balanced and related independent clauses?
- 2. Why would you use a semicolon between two independent clauses instead of leaving them as two sentences?
- 3. Explain the "furthermore" test for semicolon use.
- 4. When do you use semicolons in a list?
- 5. When do you use a colon?
- 6. Name different kinds of things that can follow a colon.
- 7. What is the test to see if a colon is the correct punctuation mark to use when combing sentences or thoughts?
- 8. How are colons used in sentence fragments? What are permitted fragments?

- 9. Explain the rule about using a colon after a verb. Name one way to decide whether to use the colon or the verb.
- 10. What is a dash used for? What are the rules for using dashes? What should you be careful with when using dashes?
- 11. Describe the test that can be used to see if a dash is an appropriate punctuation mark.

Applications and Activities

- 1. Revisit the discussion about these punctuation marks that was held before showing the video. Check to see if all of the questions have been answered. (See BEFORE SHOWING 1.)
- 2. Working in small groups, develop a quiz on the information in the video to be used with classmates or other classes.
 - a. Create multiple-choice, true/false, or fill-in-the blanks questions.
 - b. Decide on the correct answer or answers. Be ready to justify the answers.
 - c. As a culminating part of the project, vote on the best quiz and discuss the criteria used in making that selection.
- 3. Create original sentences that attempt to use these punctuation marks in creative—and correct!—ways. Share the original sentences in small groups. Discuss the choices made.
- 4. Practice using semicolons correctly. In the following sentences, replace commas with semicolons as needed for correctness.
 - a. The oranges were sour, however, the plums were sweet.
 - b. Three people were honored: John, who had won the long jump, Paul, who had won the discus, Anne, who had won the dash.
 - c. When the cub saw the snake, the tiny bear immediately froze.
 - d. We sent four delegates to the assembly, because there were four clubs represented.
 - e. The cub saw the snake, it immediately ran back to its mother.
- 5. Practice using the colon correctly. Use the colon, where appropriate, in the following sentences.
 - a. The three finalists were Kenyatta, Gelila, and Andy.
 - b. The panel announced the three finalists Kenyatta, Gelila, and Andy.
 - c. The judge reached a verdict the defendants owed the plaintiffs two million.
 - d. Here's what the judge said "I've never seen a clearer case of fraud."
 - e. The attorneys said the ruling was hasty, unfair, and excessive.
- 6. Discuss and decide whether a semicolon, colon, or either is most appropriate in the following sentences. Defend your choice with evidence from the video.
 - a. There were four choices for dinner ___ there were five for breakfast.
 - b. There were four choices for dinner ___ swordfish steak, linguini with clam sauce, beef stew, and a vegetable plate.
 - c. The kids did their homework ___ therefore, they could watch the horror movie.
 - d. The leaves thickly covered the yard __ it was time for raking.
 - e. Here comes the sun ___ warm, bright, and creating strange shadows in the forest.
- 7. Discuss the following sentences and decide if a dash or comma is more appropriate.
 - a. The tape you ordered __ Mr. Carruthers __ came in last night.

Captioned Media Program

- b. Is that really your name __ John Smith __ or are you really that archfiend we've been tracking?
- c. The next street __ I think __is the one we're looking for.
- d. Saturday __ how wonderful __is my birthday!
- e. The detectives turned the corner __ a hail of gunfire greeted them.

SUMMARY

Filled with solid information and good advice, this program defines the rules for using the semicolon, the colon, and the dash, offering clear-cut caveats against misuse and overuse along the way. Litmus tests, such as the "furthermore" test and the "and here it is" test, make it easy to tell when to utilize these punctuation marks, while Thai food, spaghetti sauce, and even oatmeal with paprika spice up the numerous examples.

RELATED RESOURCES

- The Split-Infinitive World of English Grammar: Program 6 #10154
- Punctuation: Program 6-Introduction to Punctuation and the End Marks #9986
- Punctuation: Program 7–The Wily Comma #9995
- Punctuation: Program 9–Surrounding Information #9991
- Punctuation: Program 10-Hyphens, Apostrophes, Slashes, and Ellipses #9990
- The Grammar Key #9207

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

STANDARD DEVIANTS: ENGLISH PUNCTUATION



http://standarddeviants.com/pls/brain/cerebellum.show_subj_resource?p_info_type_id=5&p_subj_ect_id=21

Includes downloadable tests, interactive quizzes, puzzles, games, and helpful punctuation cards.

• THE BLUE BOOK OF GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION



http://www.grammarbook.com/

This award-winning site created by Jane Strauss includes printable punctuation exercises and tests.

PUNCTUATION MARKS

http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/marks.htm

Includes information and explanation about various punctuation marks and provides interactive online quizzes.

SEMICOLONS, COLONS, AND DASHES

http://www.lclark.edu/~writing/handouts/Semicolons.pdf

This PDF document from the Writing Center at Lewis and Clark College explains in detail the correct uses for the semicolon, colon, and dash. It also explains incorrect uses and tells things to avoid.