

Functional Skills

English

Level 2 Writing W5d

Accurately Punctuate Written Text using Colons &
Semicolons

v1.0

Functional Skills English:

Level 2

Skill Standard:

Writing W5d

Coverage and Range:

Accurately punctuate written text using colons and semicolons.

'This builds on the requirement for accuracy in the use of full stops, capital letters and question marks at previous levels, including correct use of standard punctuation.

'A high level of accuracy is essential if the writing is to be functional – not only to be understood but presented in the most effective way with no negative impact on the outcome or reader.

'Learners should understand how incorrect punctuation can alter the meaning and emphasis of written text and is likely to reduce both comprehension and interest.'¹

Please ensure that you have completed the commas workbook before undertaking the following exercises.

Contains public sector information from the DfT licensed under the Open Government Licence v2.0. Sloman L. et al, (2009) Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in six Cycling Demonstration Towns Report for Department for Transport and Cycling England

¹ QCA Functional Skills guidance: amplification of the standards June 2008 QCA/08/3700

Semicolons

Colons (:) and semicolons (;) are frequently misunderstood pieces of punctuation that, once their usage is explained, are in and of themselves quite straightforward to comprehend.

To begin with the latter, semicolons produce a pause slightly longer than a comma but less than a full stop. They are used:

- 1) to separate items in long, complicated and/or comma strewn lists;
- 2) before transitional words and phrases, e.g. however;
- 3) and to join closely related independent clauses (complete sentences).

Separating Items in Lists

In looking at the first instance, semicolons allow writers to clearly separate lists of lengthy and/or complicated items, especially where these already contain commas. Many, but by no means all, such lists begin with a colon. As an example, consider this sentence:

'The packet of lollipops I bought contained the following coloured sweets: red and white, red, white and blue, blue with yellow stripes, green, yellow and orange, and pink with a purple edge.'

As you can see, from this description it is unclear just how many differently coloured lollipops there were. In order to clarify this, semicolons should be used:

'The packet of lollipops I bought contained the following coloured sweets: red and white; red; white and blue; blue with yellow stripes; green, yellow and orange; and pink with a purple edge.'

Note that the semicolon before the final *and* in effect acts as an Oxford comma.

This same issue also surfaces in lists where the individual items are quite lengthy, as in this excerpt from *A Christmas Carol*:

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time.

Care should be taken not to unnecessarily include semicolons instead of commas, as in truth the two pieces of punctuation often go hand-in-hand. Here, though, it is once more the lack of semicolons that causes difficulties for the reader:

I lived in Paris, France, in the summer of '97, London for two months, Truro, Cornwall, Winchester, Hampshire, Mansfield, Retford and Newark, Nottinghamshire, and Chichester and Lewes, Sussex.

As is obvious below, the inclusion of semicolons makes the text perfectly clear:

I lived in Paris, France, in the summer of '97; London for two months; Truro, Cornwall; Winchester, Hampshire; Mansfield, Retford and Newark, Nottinghamshire; and Chichester and Lewes, Sussex.

Exercise 1a

Whilst one or more of the sentences below are correct, others are mispunctuated. **Add**, where necessary, **commas and semicolons** into appropriate places in the lines below. Leave the full stops as they are.

- 1) Over the last 10 years, the Olympics have been held in London Beijing, China and Athens, Greece.
-

- 2) The best features of the phone are: 5.5" touch LED screen a weight of just 162g 401 pixels per inch; screen density 13MP camera and a 250 hour battery life.
-

- 3) The list of venues includes County Hall, Nottingham the Liver Building, Liverpool Kingston Hall, Birmingham and; the Crucible, Sheffield.
-

- 4) The leaden, rain-cloud strewn sky the rust-tinged, curdled bay and the malodorous, lingering stench of guano and chip fat: what an assault on the senses greets each and every visitor to Fawlty-on-Sea.
-

- 5) First off the boat and onto dry land came the lead crew members: John Masefield, the expedition leader, aged 40 Hillary Stirland, navigator and the boson, Josiah Finn, 21.
-

- 6) My top five favourite Victorian buildings are St. Pancras Railway Station, London the John Rylands Library; in Manchester the Forth Rail Bridge, Edinburgh the University of Birmingham's Aston Webb building and the Victoria Law Courts in the same city.
-

- 7) The population of Mansfield was 7,842 in 1801 31,560 in 1901 and 98,095 in 2001.
-

Exercise 1b

Now write two sentences of your own which incorporate semicolons as described above:

Exercise 1c

Identify whether one, both or neither sentence is **correctly punctuated** and circle your answer.

- 1) A. If he ever wins the lottery, Greg says his needs will be simple and few: a super-computer; a solid gold house; a remote-controlled submarine, and a rocket car.
- B. If he ever wins the lottery, Greg says his needs will be simple and few: a super-computer; a solid gold house; a remote controlled submarine; and a rocket car.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 2) A. The first five Sheriffs of Nottingham were as follows:

William Peverel, 1068;
Hugh fitz Baldric, 1069–1080;
Hugh de Port, 1081–1087;
Richard fitz Gotse; 1087–1105;
and Helgot, 1105.

- B. The first five Sheriffs of Nottingham were as follows:

William Peverel, 1068;
Hugh fitz Baldric, 1069–1080;
Hugh de Port, 1081–1087;
Richard fitz Gotse, 1087–1105;
and Helgot, 1105.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 3) A. The decorations were laid out before us on the table: minute glass baubles from Italy; the wooden ones Matthew won as a child, and finally the sparkling tinsel like a mass of silver snakes.

- B. The decorations were laid out before us on the table, minute glass baubles from Italy; the wooden ones Matthew won as a child; and finally the sparkling tinsel like a mass of silver snakes.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 4) A. When I studied abroad, I met students from Chicago USA, Perth Australia, and Timbuktu Mali.

- B. When I studied abroad, I met students from Chicago USA; Perth, Australia; and Timbuktu, Mali.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

5) A. This week's winners are Grace from Biggin Hill, London; Suzie from Hawkinge near Folkestone, Kent; and R. J. Mitchell from Hornchurch.

B. This week's winners are Grace from Biggin Hill, London; Suzie from Hawkinge near Folkestone, Kent; and R. J. Mitchell; from Hornchurch.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

6) A. The back four are; Smalling from United; Gibbs, Arsenal; Cahill, Chelsea; and, Jagielka from Everton.

B. The back four are Smalling from United; Gibbs, Arsenal; Cahill, Chelsea; and Jagielka from Everton.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

7) A. The team was composed of the head gardener, Wilkinson, a man of few words; the landscaper, Mr Paxton; the renowned horticulturalist, Charles Forsyth; and me.

B. The team was composed of the head gardener, Wilkinson; a man of few words; the landscaper, Mr Paxton; the renowned horticulturalist, Charles Forsyth; and me.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

8) A. The three main forms of temperature measurement are Celsius, named after a Swedish astronomer; Fahrenheit, which takes its title from a German physicist; and Kelvin, the namesake of the illustrious British mathematician and engineer.

B. The three main forms of temperature measurement are Celsius, named after a Swedish astronomer; Fahrenheit, which takes its title from a German physicist, and Kelvin, the namesake of the illustrious British mathematician and engineer.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

9) A. Moons of the Solar System include Earth's own natural satellite, Mars's Phobos and Deimos; Jupiter's Europa and Ganymede; and Saturn's Atlas and Pandora.

B. Moons of the Solar System include Earth's own natural satellite; Mars's Phobos and Deimos; Jupiter's; Europa and Ganymede; and Saturn's Atlas and Pandora.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

Before Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitional words and phrases are those which are used to connect one independent clause to another in order to create a longer sentence, e.g. *furthermore*, *in contrast*, *however*, *therefore*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, *finally*, *by the way*, *next*, *consequently*, etc. Note that when used in this way, each such word or phrase should be preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma:

I could not finish eating my dinner; instead, I gave half of it to the dog.

I find your argument in many ways compelling; nevertheless, I am still inclined to disagree.

The use of vitamin C to prevent colds is widespread; however, there is limited evidence to support the belief that it works.

The interviewee is stuck in traffic; consequently, we will not be able to start on time.

You could, of course, replace the semicolon in each of the above cases with a full stop, but this would impact on the flow of the line as it was being read.

Note: When the transitional word or phrase does not appear at the very start of the second clause, the semicolon still goes between the clauses as it always would. The only difference in this situation is that a pair of commas should go either side of the transition:

The defendant gave his testimony and claimed that he had an alibi; the CCTV evidence, however, painted a very different picture.

Exercise 2a

Whilst one or more of the sentences below are correct, others are mispunctuated. Leave the full stops as they are, but remove **commas and semicolons** where they are misplaced and **add** them in where they are **missing**:

1) I do hope you like the gift however please feel free to take it back if it doesn't fit.

2) Martina has misplaced her handbag consequently she has lost her purse.

3) The experiment was a failure as a result we will have to wait longer for our flying cars.

4) I think all tutors should be given a raise after all we're worth it!

5) I have at long last finished the animation therefore please find it attached.

6) Cutting down on sugary drinks is great for your wellbeing besides it also saves on trips to the dentist!

7) I understand what I am meant to do nevertheless I can't get motivated enough to do it.

8) I have an inkling that it is answer B at any rate it can't be A or C.

9) The patient has fractured three of his metacarpals in other words he won't be having his piano lesson this week.

10) You scored 70% on the test nevertheless I feel you could have got even higher.

Exercise 2b

Now write two sentences of your own which incorporate semicolons as described above:

Exercise 2c

Identify whether one, both or neither sentence is **correctly punctuated** and circle your answer.

- 1) A. I have a lot to say but very little time; in brief, I am therefore resigning.
B. I have a lot to say but very little time in brief; I am, therefore, resigning.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 2) A. First, the fridge's light is broken; secondly, the freezer does not work.
B. First, the fridge's light is broken, secondly the freezer does not work.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 3) A. Jodie loves vegetables, however, she cannot stand fruit.
B. Jodie loves vegetables; however, she cannot stand fruit.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 4) A. The review was truly impressive, unquestionably, it was the best I'd ever had.
B. The review was truly impressive unquestionably, it was the best I'd ever had.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 5) A. You use more than 40 muscles when you frown on the other hand; you use fewer than 30 when you smile.
B. You use more than 40 muscles when you frown; on the other hand, you use fewer than 30 when you smile.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 6) A. There was a thunderous knocking from outside, suddenly; the door flew open!
B. There was a thunderous knocking; from outside suddenly, the door flew open!

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 7) A. Justine memorised her speech accordingly; she didn't need her notes.
B. Justine memorised her speech, accordingly, she didn't need her notes.
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
- 8) A. William is a great footballer although he isn't very good; in the air.
B. William is a great footballer although, he isn't very good, in the air.
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
- 9) A. Miss Broom is a stickler for punctuality; doubtless, she has never been late in her life!
B. Miss Broom is a stickler; for punctuality, doubtless, she has never been late in her life!
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
- 10) A. Mr Peters, you are innocent of all the charges; consequently you are free to go.
B. Mr Peters, you are innocent; of all the charges consequently, you are free to go.
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

Joining Closely Related Independent Clauses

The last primary use of semicolons is to connect complete sentences, also known as *independent clauses*. The crux here is that the clauses should normally not be separated by a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*), and must be *closely related* in terms of their content, with the semicolon appearing between them:

Email me next week; you will have more information then.

It was really dangerous; people were lucky to get away without injury.

Drive slowly and sensibly; if an elephant jumps out, you'll be glad you did.

Note that, as in **Exercise 2**, in the above examples you could use full stops instead of semicolons, but doing so would create a more pronounced pause between the two clauses.

Exercise 3a

The sentences below are mispunctuated. Leave the full stops as they are, but remove **commas and semicolons** where they are misplaced and **add** them in where they are **missing**:

1) I'm allergic to seafood when I eat clams; I come out in hives.

2) Roadworks on the bypass; have caused massive disruption journey times have more than doubled.

3) The air in here is stale and stuffy I shall open a window; when I have a spare moment.

4) To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune to lose both looks like carelessness.

5) Alone, we can do so little together, we can do so much.

6) Trust men and they will be true to you treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.

7) No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir I do bite my thumb, though.

8) The tears welled into her eyes she tore his hand away and threw herself on the couch.

9) In the room on his right there followed a painful silence in the room on his left his sister began to play the viola.

10) An independent clause is a complete sentence it makes sense on its own.

Exercise 3b

Now write two sentences of your own which incorporate semicolons as described above:

Exercise 3c

Identify whether one, both or neither sentence is **correctly punctuated** and circle your answer.

- 1) A. I drank the fruit punch; Richard drank the lime and lemonade.
B. I drank the fruit punch Richard; drank the lime and lemonade.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 2) A. A semicolon joins two related clauses, the clause after a colon adds to the one before it.
B. A semicolon joins two related clauses; the clause after a colon adds to the one before it.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 3) A. I am optimistic about the experiment; the estimated figures seem so encouraging.
B. I am optimistic about the experiment the estimated figures; seem so encouraging.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 4) A. You can't drive that route nowadays; the road doesn't go there anymore.
B. You can't drive that route nowadays as the road doesn't go there; anymore.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 5) A. Together we stared at the sunset, over the mountains we were lost for words.
B. Together we stared at the sunset; over the mountains we were lost for words.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 6) A. The runners in this marathon are like machines, they're honed to perfection.
B. The runners in this marathon are; like machines they're honed to perfection.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 7) A. I couldn't believe my eyes; never had I dreamt of this possibility.
B. I couldn't believe my eyes, never had I dreamt of this possibility.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 8) A. The workmen struggled for over an hour, the tree root, though, refused to budge.
B. The workmen struggled for over an hour; the tree root, though, refused to budge.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 9) A. Hot tea, buttered toast and porridge with honey; this is surely the breakfast of champions.
B. Hot tea, buttered toast and porridge with honey this is surely the breakfast of champions.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

- 10) A. Australians and Americans call it soccer; while the rest of the world plays football.
B. Australians and Americans call it soccer while the rest of the world plays football.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

Colons

Colons (:) have four chief purposes:

- 1) To introduce lists;

I have several favourite drinks: water with ice on a summer's day; homemade lemonade after a long, tiring run; and a cup of tea on a chilly winter's morning.

- 2) To introduce quotations;

On the eve of the First World War, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, said: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our life-time.'

- 3) To introduce appositives;

He was watching his favourite television programme: Match of the Day.

- 4) And to join one independent clause with a second which explains or adds detail to it;

She got what was coming to her: It was an award for best employee!

In terms of minor roles, colons are also frequently used for short introductions or to separate the title of an artistic work from its subtitle:

- ✓ *For sale: dune buggy with roll cage*
- ✓ *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*
- ✓ *Warning: Sharp Edges*
- ✓ *Danger: Laser radiation emitter*

Within Horizontal Lists

You don't always have to introduce a list with a colon of course, but when you do, you should not capitalise the word after it unless it starts a complete sentence or it's a proper noun (e.g. *India, Mount Everest, Great Pyramid of Giza*, etc.):

My half marathon times have been getting better: 2h 32m, 2h 21m and 2h 15m.

I can't choose between my three favourite cities: Tokyo, Miami and Toronto.

I love several foods: fish and chips, burgers and beans, and falafel in pitta bread.

When deciding whether to use a colon to introduce a list or not, it's quite simple:

1. **Do** use a colon when the introductory clause ends in a word or phrase which describes the items in the list:

Jacob listed all the things that he needed to take into the examination: a compass, a protractor, a pencil, pen and calculator.

- ✓ This colon is correctly used because the words up to it form a clause which describes the items that follow.

On my parents' farm they grow four crops corn, wheat, soya and potatoes.

- ✗ This sentence is incorrect. There should be a colon after *crops* because the introduction describes the items that follow it.

2. **Do not** use a colon when the introduction needs to include the items in the list in order for it to make sense as a sentence itself:

I need to buy yeast spread, Brussels sprouts and baked beans.

- ✓ This sentence is incorrect. No colon should be used after *buy* because the underlined introduction requires the listed items that follow in order for it to make sense by itself.

3. **Do not** use a colon after introductions which end in verbs e.g. are, comprises; prepositions e.g. include, such as, or as; or the phrases for example or for instance.

The names of my aunt Nellie's dogs are: Buster, Bullseye and Biggles.

- ✗ No colon is needed after *are* as it is a verb.

I bought sweets for: Janet, Justin, Justine and Milo.

- ✗ No colon is needed after *for* as it is a preposition.

4. The exceptions to Rule 3 are those introductory clauses which contain either **as follows** or **the following**.

The following people have been awarded prizes: Tanya, Malcolm and Ingrid.

The names of my aunt Nellie's dogs are as follows: Buster, Bullseye and Biggles.

- ✓ These colons are correct because the introductions contain *as follows* / *the following*.

Note: As is often the case with English, many people, for various reasons, frequently use colons to create non-standard lists:

Sun, sea and sand: Hawaii is simply paradise. (This is acceptable as the introduction and list are merely reversed.)

To do: weed the garden, take the dog for a walk, and make the beds. (This is unacceptable as the introduction ends in a verb and is an incomplete sentence.)

In every strictly correct case involving colons and horizontal lists, it is worth noting that the introduction will be an **independent clause** (a complete sentence that makes sense on its own.)

Within Vertical Lists

When dealing with vertical lists which are introduced by a colon, the capitalisation and end-of-line punctuation rules are not rigorously applied. Within your own writing the key, as ever, is to pick a style and be consistent. All of the following are acceptable:

✓ My Holiday Checklist:

- sunglasses
- swimming shorts
- suntan lotion
- sandals
- surfboard

✓ My holiday checklist includes the following:

Sunglasses, so I look cool
Swimming shorts, so I can swim
Suntan lotion, to get me bronzed
Sandals, for the beach
Surfboard, so I can ride the waves

✓ My issues are as follows:

Lisa does not empty the bins on time;
Martin never vacuums the house;
and Gilbert hasn't emptied the dishwasher since he moved in.

Exercise 4a

Please note that all the lists below are **horizontal**, and that the standard rules have been rigorously applied to them when creating the *correct* answers.

Whilst one or more of the sentences below are correct, others are mispunctuated. Insert or remove colons wherever required:

- 1) The prize is as follows: taxi to Manchester, flights to both Amsterdam and then Milan, plus hotel accommodation and £1,000 spending money.
- 2) Highlights of the show include acrobats, trapeze artists, Crinkly the Clown and an amazing wild animal show.
- 3) The toys we bought Jack for Christmas were: stacking blocks, a train and a blue-and-yellow tricycle.
- 4) I ride my bicycle to work most days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.
- 5) Last year I holidayed in: Buxton, Cumbria and Rhyl.
- 6) We bought Jack such great Christmas toys: stacking blocks, a train and a blue-and-yellow tricycle.
- 7) Through my telescope I can see many wonderful things the moon, Venus, stars, Mars, some comets and even satellites.
- 8) Australasia is comprised of Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, and various other Pacific islands.
- 9) In order of preference, my favourite punctuation marks are: comma, semicolon, colon, and exclamation mark.
- 10) Abel Tasman, the famous Dutch sea captain, was many things husband, father, navigator, explorer, and merchant.
- 11) Do not forget to: wash the dog, feed the cat, and clean the budgie's cage.
- 12) Each scout will be required to carry the following: three days' food, a compass, water bottle, and sleeping bag.

Exercise 4b

Adapt the information below in order to create properly punctuated lists which either avoid colons entirely or make strictly correct use of them.

Example You're taking a trip and must check your car's oil, water and washer fluid.

a) *Before my trip I must check several things: the car's oil, water and washer fluid.*

b) *Before my trip I must check the car's oil, water and washer fluid.*

- 1) You're shopping for tea, milk, sugar and biscuits.
-

- 2) You're writing a jogging checklist to include sweatbands, shorts, shoes and t-shirt.
-

- 3) You're preparing jelly, ice cream, sandwiches and crisps for a child's party.
-
- 4) You're emailing a friend to say that thrillers, sci-fi and romance are your favourite film genres.
-
- 5) You're describing a board game, *Manic Panic*, which is fun, thrill-filled and exciting to play.
-
- 6) You're arguing that a hotel would be poor because of its location, price and rating.
-
- 7) You're persuading a friend to buy a new car as his is outdated, slow, noisy and loud.
-
- 8) You're informing a colleague of a new app which will record their speech, turn it into texts and emails, and then translate it into 20 different languages.
-
- 9) You're blogging about the highlights of a consumer electronics show in which you played a new 3D driving game, trialled a wearable mobile phone, and read a digital newspaper printed with smart ink.
-
- 10) You're struggling to choose the best from your top three Formula One drivers of all-time, including Ayrton Senna, Michael Schumacher and Lewis Hamilton.
-

Exercise 4c

Using your knowledge of the rules surrounding colons, create two horizontal and two vertical lists of your own. Have your tutor check them when you are finished.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Introducing Quotations

Both inline and in separately indented sections, colons can be used to introduce direct quotes and speech. There is no hard and fast rule, but commas tend to be used to introduce shorter quotes, quote fragments and those introduced with *said*, whilst colons are reserved for more abrupt or dramatic pauses, full sentences and/or longer examples:

The manager stated: 'The shop will close at the end of May. It's very sad news.'

In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the narrator remarks that: "Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma. There it is before you, smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, 'Come and find out.'"

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* features the classic sea shanty:

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

Note that there is no requirement for a colon used in this way to be preceded by a complete sentence, but quotes should be contained within inverted commas and retain their original capitalisation. When in doubt, stick with a comma.

Exercise 5a

Whilst one or more of the sentences below are correct, others are mispunctuated. Some require colons inserting or removing, whilst others require colons to replace their commas:

- 1) The Minister stated 'I have no idea where these allegations have come from, and I am quite prepared to defend myself in court in order to rebut them.'
- 2) Margaret Thatcher once remarked 'To those waiting with bated breath forth at favourite media catch phrase, the "U-turn", I have only one thing to say: You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning.'
- 3) I like the Gandhi quote: 'Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.'
- 4) In June 1963, President Kennedy gave a speech: in which he announced 'All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a freeman, I take pride in the words "Ich bin ein Berliner!"'
- 5) One of David Coleman's on-air gaffes was "And the line-up for the final of the women's 400 metres hurdles includes three Russians, two East Germans, a Pole, a Swede and a Frenchman."

- 6) Antarctic sea ice reached a record high this year. A scientist was quoted as saying 'The amount of ice is greater than at any point since satellite measurements began in the late 1970s.'
- 7) The striker modestly described the moment: in front of the world's press 'It was an audacious lob which totally outfoxed the keeper and left him gasping on his back in the six yard area like a fish out of water.'
- 8) The lady told me 'The book can be ordered online much cheaper than if you buy it in-store.'
- 9) The rogue stood on the window ledge and, before abseiling to the ground, issued a final smirking remark 'Much obliged for your jewellery, ma'am!'

Exercise 5b

Identify if neither, one or both sentences are **correctly punctuated** in terms of colons and circle your answer.

1. A) Roger Zelazny, author of *The Guns of Avalon*, once quipped: "Nobody steals your books but your friends."
B) Roger Zelazny: author of *The Guns of Avalon*, once quipped "Nobody steals your books but your friends."
First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
2. A) A cure for diabetes could appear within months if the: 'incredible breakthrough', hailed by scientists, turns out to be accurate.
B) A cure for diabetes: could appear within months if the 'incredible breakthrough' hailed by scientists turns out to be accurate.
First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
3. A) "The manager of the Japanese corporation developing the technology said: that the mechanical suits 'will enable the disabled to walk again.'"
B) "The manager of the Japanese corporation developing the technology said that: the mechanical suits 'will enable the disabled to walk again.'"
First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
4. A) I said 'I'm leaving,' as I walked: off stage.
B) I said 'I'm leaving': as I walked off stage.
First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

5. A) Professor Ben Williams declared: 'At 59 tonnes, *dreadnoughtus* was the largest land animal ever. It pales into comparison, however, when compared with the 170 tonne weight of the blue whale.'

B) Professor Ben Williams: declared that at 59 tonnes *dreadnoughtus* was the largest land animal ever. It pales into comparison, however, when compared with the 170 tonne weight of the blue whale.'

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

6. A) Fortune favours the brave, or as Admiral Nelson put it: 'The measure may be thought bold, but I am of the opinion the boldest are the safest.'

B) Fortune favours the brave: or as Admiral Nelson put it: 'The measure may be thought bold, but I am of the opinion the boldest are the safest.'

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

7. A) 'An epithet: is a description or nickname,' said the professor. 'Examples include Alexander the Great, Charles the Fat and Crazy Otto of Bavaria.'

B) 'An epithet is a description or nickname,' said the professor. 'Examples include Alexander the Great: Charles the Fat: and Crazy Otto of Bavaria.'

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

8. A) The first programmable computer was Colossus: 'A machine the size of a room.'

B) The first programmable computer was: Colossus: A machine the size of a room.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

9. A) Mrs Murphy felt infuriated 'The referee was: a joke.'

B) Mrs Murphy felt infuriated: 'The referee was a joke.'

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

10. A) The commentator was nearly breathless, "All he needs now is double top: and the darts world championship is his!"

B) The commentator was nearly breathless: 'All he needs now is double top and the darts world championship is his!'

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

Exercise 5c

Using your knowledge of the rules surrounding colons, create four sentences which correctly use them to introduce quotations.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Introducing Appositives

The question most people will be asking at this point is: *What's an appositive?* Well, it's very simple. An appositive is a word, phrase or clause which renames an adjoining **noun** or **noun phrase** (a noun made up of more than one word e.g. *that cat, today's weather, final countdown, this pot of delicious natural yoghurt*).

In the examples below, the **noun/noun phrase** is in bold, whilst the appositive is underlined. Normally, no matter where they appear in a sentence, most appositives are introduced (and/or bracketed) by commas, e.g.

***The dog**, a large, black and white mongrel, ran off into the woods.*

*The captain is **Silas Green**, a frog-faced maniac.*

*A dark shadow, **the wolf** flitted amongst the trees.*

Only when an appositive appears at the end of a sentence, and only for a significant pause or dramatic effect, may it be introduced with a colon instead:

*He's watching **his favourite TV programme**: Match of the Day.*

*She learned **her lesson**: look before you leap.*

*This award is in recognition of **Jolene's best attribute**: determination.*

*With fractions, always follow the **golden rule**: what you do to one part you must do to the other.*

*I know just **what you need**: a cup of tea.*

As you will have no doubt realised, even if you didn't refer to them *appositives*, you will

have frequently used such sentence forms in your own speech and writing.

Exercise 6a

Highlight the noun/noun phrases in the sentences below and underline the appositives.

- 1) There's only one person at fault here: Darryl.
- 2) Alice wanted just two things: peace and quiet.
- 3) I love school except for Mrs Race's class: geography.
- 4) That ends the annual summer ball: the best event in the social calendar.
- 5) Jason's got the best job title: Games Guru and Systems Architect.
- 6) At university my brother studied economics: the dull science.

Exercise 6b

Whilst one or more of the sentences below are correct, others are mispunctuated. Add, move or remove colons wherever necessary. Be aware that in one sentence the appositive is in the wrong place, and in that instance commas are required.

- 1) Marco was day-dreaming about his favourite meal: fish and chips.
- 2) All I'm asking for is one simple, little consideration silence for the next 60 seconds.
- 3) There's only one thing than can help us here chocolate!
- 4) The bear advanced like a creature from a nightmare ominous, implacable and unyielding.
- 5) The restaurant's food was as pleasant as its décor: past its best and tasteless.
- 6) Churning through the water, its tail whipping and jaws snapping, came the alligator two tonnes and twenty-two feet of man-eating madness.
- 7) Roger Tanner: summed up the event's real purpose having fun.
- 8) The defendant's fate lies in the hands of a group of people he's never met the jury.
- 9) Mountain biking my favourite hobby.
- 10) The U.S. Constitution the supreme law of the United States of America.

Exercise 6c

Identify if neither, one or both sentences are **correctly punctuated** in terms of colons and circle your answer.

1. A) Every day my wife makes my lunch: sandwich, crisps, yoghurt and five pieces of fruit.
B) Every day: my wife makes my lunch, sandwich, crisps, yoghurt and five pieces of fruit.

First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

2. A) My favourite colour is: turquoise, a hue somewhere between blue and green.
B) My favourite colour is turquoise, a hue: somewhere between blue and green.
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
3. A) In the film Casablanca: Humphrey Bogart plays arguably his greatest ever role, the cynical, life-weary casino and bar owner, Rick Blaine.
B) In the film Casablanca, Humphrey Bogart: plays arguably his greatest ever role, the cynical, life-weary casino and bar owner: Rick Blaine.
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
4. A) Singapore was founded in 1819: by the British statesman, Sir Thomas Raffles.
B) Singapore: was founded in 1819 by the British statesman Sir Thomas Raffles.
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
5. A) From Gary, Indiana, Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon and Michael were better known by their collective title: The Jackson Five.
B) From Gary, Indiana: Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon and Michael were better known by their collective title, The Jackson Five.
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence
6. A) He's the man who can and the host with the most: Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the eighth wonder of the world, me!
B) He's the man who can and the host with the most. Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the eighth wonder of the world: me!
- First sentence only Second sentence only Both sentences Neither Sentence

Exercise 6d

Using your knowledge of the rules surrounding colons, create four sentences which correctly use them to introduce appositives.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Joining Independent Clauses

The last typical use of colons is arguably the least understood – the joining of two independent clauses in order that the second *emphasises* the first. In these instances, the *official* rules are that the two sentences must (a) be related to one another in terms of their content, (b) each be complete on their own, and (c) not be separated by a conjunction or other connective word or phrase:

Bryony was mortified and almost in tears: She and Sara were wearing the same dresses!

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Now you may well be thinking to yourself – *Wouldn't a full stop or semicolon work just as well as that colon?* – and in doing so you'd be absolutely right. In fact the choice of which piece of punctuation to use depends solely on the emphasis you wish to place on the sentences. A full stop places a firm halt between the two clauses; a semicolon emphasises the fact that they are closely related; whilst a colon tends to be used when the second clause adds something of an explanation to the first.

Exercise 7a

All of the sentences below are missing their colons. Insert them where appropriate.

- 1) The devastation was universal not a wall or a stick of furniture was left standing.
- 2) I had a terrible weekend I fell off a set of ladders whilst gardening on Saturday morning and only got discharged from hospital at 6pm on Sunday.
- 3) Another airport is the last thing we need round here the place is overcrowded as it is.
- 4) After research lasting more than 10 years, the committee has reached a decision the new medicine will go into production next year in our factory.
- 5) Janet is one of the kindest people I know I think she'd give her last penny to charity.
- 6) There is only one possible explanation that holds water the gold must have been stolen from the luggage car during the night.
- 7) We need imaginative solutions to our problems brains not brawn will see us through.
- 8) Only I will decide if I can conquer this mountain truly I am the master of my fate.

Exercise 7b

Some of the sentences below incorrectly use colons, i.e. they don't join two independent clauses which are related to one another in an answer-explanation relationship. Tick those which are wholly correct and put a cross next to those in which a full stop or semicolon would be more appropriate.

- 1) Time waits for no man: that's just typical of Ryan.
- 2) Ben's attitude is spot on: last weekend's match was just awfully dull.
- 3) I think the paperclip is the greatest invention ever: it beats TV or the internet any day.
- 4) I am going to Spain: I don't know how to tap dance.
- 5) Football is the gentlemen's game played by ruffians: how true.
- 6) One morning I found an elephant in my pyjamas: How he got into my pyjamas: I'll never know.
- 7) Computer programming is my job: This bad weather, though, is getting me down.
- 8) Time flies like an arrow: fruit flies like a banana.
- 9) Vacuuming is the worst chore: I much prefer pot washing.
- 10) I didn't like the play, but then I saw it under adverse conditions: the curtain was up.

Exercise 7c

Using your knowledge of the rules surrounding colons, create four sentences which correctly use them to join independent clauses.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____
