

How to use a semicolon

The most feared punctuation on earth

Created by The Oatmeal

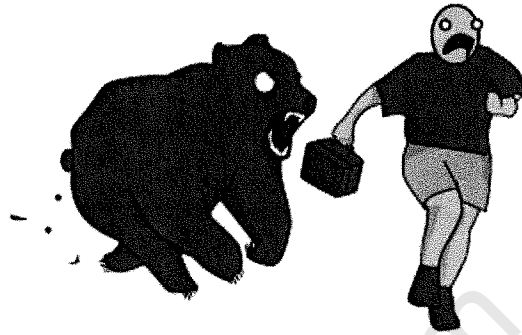
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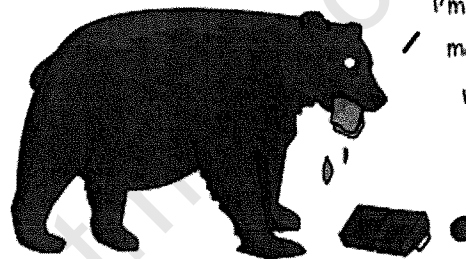
“ Using a semicolon isn't hard; I once saw a party gorilla do it. ”

Like commas, periods, and bears, **semicolons have pause.**

Comma
(brief pause)



Semicolon
(moderate pause)



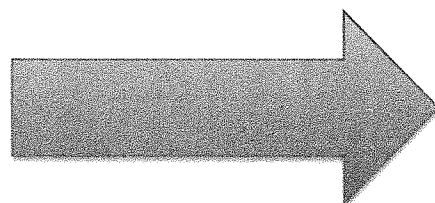
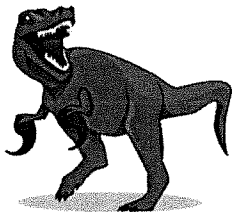
I'm pretty sure bologna is made out of cow elbows, but I ♥ it anyway.

Period
(complete stop)

zzz...zzz...z



But just like bears and velociraptors, most people are afraid of semicolons.



Like a period, **semicolons separate two independent clauses.**

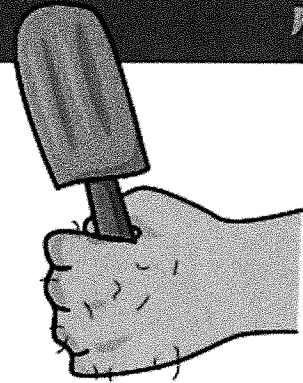
This is how the sentences below would sound with a period.

*“ The ice cream truck man drove by my house today. *take a breath*
He had big hairy knuckles. ”*

With a semicolon, however, it would sound like this:

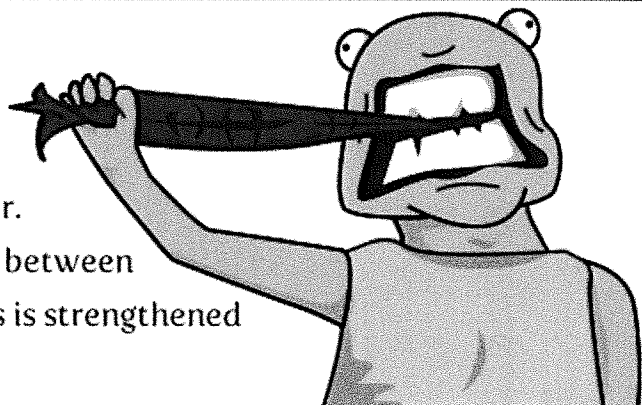
*“ The ice cream truck man drove by my house today; he had big
hairy knuckles. ”*

Basically what we did was eliminate the pause between the two statements without using words such as *and*, *but*, *nor*, or *yet*.



*“ I gnaw on old car tires; it strengthens my jaw so I'll be better conditioned
for bear combat. ”*

Use a semicolon when you want to form a bond between two statements, typically when they are related to or contrast with one another. In the example above, the relationship between gnawing on tires and combatting bears is strengthened by using a semicolon.



Based on the above, what two rules apply in order to use a semicolon? Use your own words.

Rule 1:

A semicolon is used between _____

Rule 2:

The two _____ must be _____

* Side note- Unless it's a proper noun, do not capitalize after a semicolon.

Don't

Don't use it with conjunctions.

Conjunctions are words like *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*.

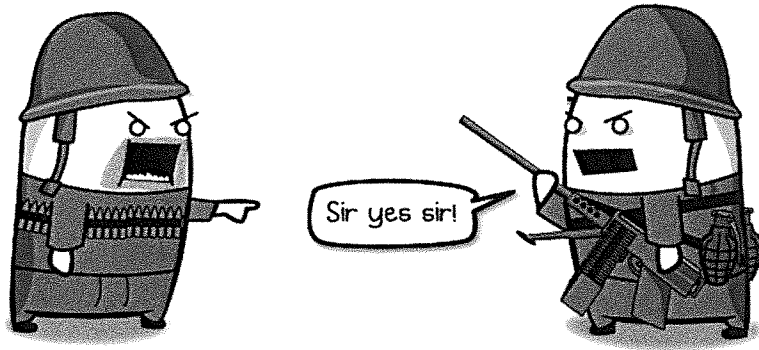
“ My aunt's hairy knuckles are magnificent indeed, but I have no desire to stroke them. ”

A comma is used because there's a *but* separating the two clauses.



Now . . .

Practice!



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Directions: Read each sentence. If the semicolon is used correctly, circle C for Correct. If the semicolon is not used correctly, circle NC for Not Correct. Feel free to work with a partner.

1. John was hungry; the candy bar in the machine looked tasty. C NC
2. The drone flew over our house; and it woke me up. C NC
3. Nick's beard is a little wild; I like it. C NC
4. The computer was left on all day; my dog's name is Klaus. C NC
5. Abraham Lincoln once said, "With educated people, I suppose, punctuation is a matter of rule; with me, it is a matter of feeling." C NC

Write one example of your own below, and be prepared to share on the board:

If the sentences don't relate or need emphasis, use subjunctive adverbs between the two sentences.

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



The tyrannosaurus sucked at comedy; therefore, the audience wanted refunds.

The tyrannosaurus didn't get any laughs; nevertheless, he pressed on.