Colons

Colons serve a few purposes, both grammatical and non-grammatical. Like semicolons, they help to link related clauses without using conjunctions. However, unlike semicolons, colons do not require both clauses to be independent:

1. Grammatical colons
You will most often use colons for the following three reasons:

To introduce a list.
Only the following items are permitted in the testing room: pencils, pens, and scratch paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIP</th>
<th>A common mistake with colons is using one after a verb:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The only items permitted in the testing room are: pencils, pens, and scratch paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The example above is incorrect because the phrase before the colon, The only items permitted in the testing room are, is a fragment ending with a verb.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When in doubt, make sure that the phrase before the colon is an independent clause.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Between independent clauses when the second explains or illustrates the first (In this case, the colon functions similarly to a semicolon).
I go running with my dog each morning: running gives us a chance to exercise, de-stress, and bond.
There are three keys to building a strong social media presence: First, post content regularly. Second, interact with your audience. Third, interact with other blogs and pages.

To emphasize a certain word or phrase.
Frigid winters and hot, humid summers: these are the weather conditions that Midwesterners learn to endure during their lives.

2. Non-grammatical colons
Colons serve a number of non-grammatical purposes, many of them common. You will see colons used for the following reasons:

Time.
6:15 a.m. 9:45 p.m.

Ratios.
3:1
Between the chapter and the verse in biblical references.
Psalms 8:9
I Corinthians 13:1-3

Between a title and a subtitle.
The Lure of Jazz: The Best of Billie Holiday
The Avengers: Age of Ultron

After the salutation of a business letter.
Dear Mr. Green:
To whom it may concern: