Semicolons

Semicolons are used between independent clauses that are closely related in thought and are not joined by the conjunctions and, but, or, so, for, nor, or yet.

Basic Examples

Several people in my family are musical; I seem to be the exception.

There are two tracks one can take to earn a Masters’ degree; a student can choose to either take a comprehensive exam or write a thesis.

Other places to use a semicolon include the following:

1. Before a conjunctive adverb (a word like therefore, however, nonetheless, etc.) to express the relationship between two independent clauses.

Greg is intelligent; however, his brother is even brighter.

Jim plans to visit family in Dallas this summer; in addition, he hopes to make time to visit friends in San Antonio.

2. In a list with internal commas used to set off nouns in apposition (see “Commas”).

Performers in the show were Doug Wilson, trumpet and trombone; Monica Bryant, clarinet and saxophone; and Dan Nelson, drums and steel guitar.