

Punctuation marks are the traffic signals of language: they tell us to slow down, notice this, take a detour, and stop.

# Punctuation Part II

C1 – C2

Module 2

Here's What  
We Will Be  
Learning:

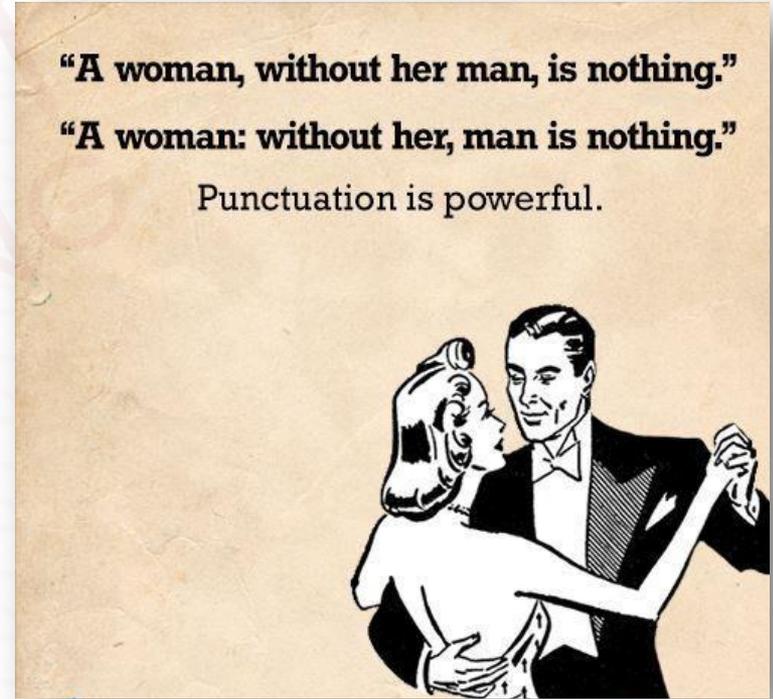


# SUMMARY

- Why are good punctuation marks important?
- Meaning and Usage of the Colon, Semicolon and Oxford (Serial) Comma.
- Exercises on each of these.

The key to successful interaction isn't just in the words, it's in the choice of punctuation. Whether spoken or written, a well-placed question mark, ellipsis or period (full-stop) can be the difference between bliss and disaster. Clever conversationalists and writers know when and how to use punctuations and the repercussions of incorrect usage.

We have already talked about basic punctuation marks - Apostrophe, Comma, Period, Exclamation and Question. In this presentation we will deal with the mighty terrors of punctuation marks which are: Colon, Semicolon and Oxford or Serial Comma.



# COLON (:)

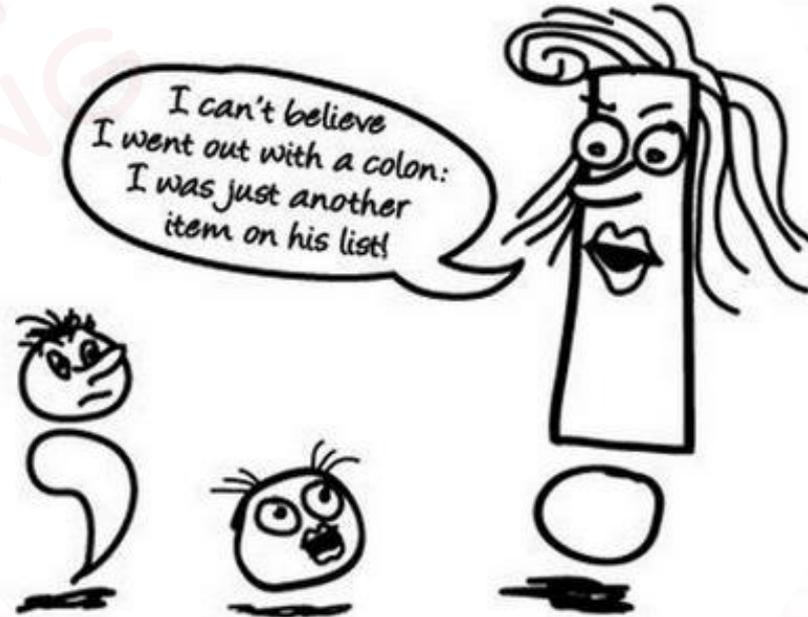
## MEANING

A colon means "that is to say" or "here's what I mean." Colons and semicolons should never be used interchangeably. E.g.:

*You know what to do: practice.*

*You may be required to bring many things: sleeping bags, pans, utensils, and warm clothing.*

*I want the following items: butter, sugar, and flour.*



# USAGE

**Use 1:** Between two main clauses, where, the second explains or follows from the first. *E.g. That is the secret to an extraordinary dessert: patience.*

**Use 2:** To introduce a list or series. *E.g. Our tour package included the following: complimentary breakfast and a local guide. Not recommended when the list directly follows a verb, for e.g., "I need oil, eggs and garlic."*

**Use 3:** Before a quote and sometimes before direct speech. *E.g. The sign read: "Beware of dog!". The teacher said: "Quiet! I will not tolerate indiscipline!"*

**Use 4:** Capitalise the first word after a colon if there is more than one complete sentence. *E.g. My mother always said: Laugh a lot. Cry a little. Make others happy.*

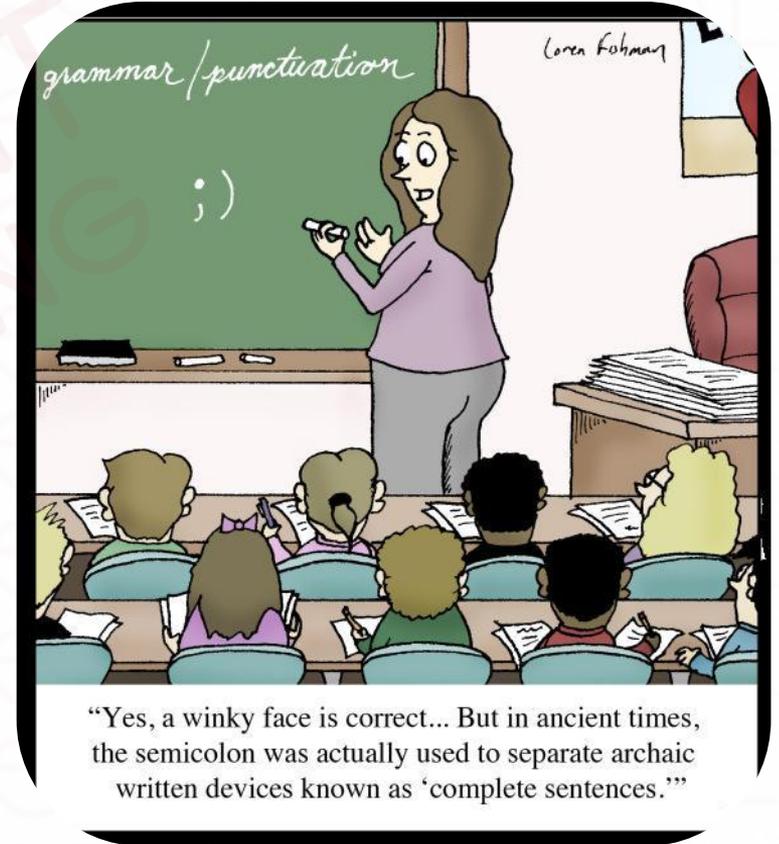
# SEMI-COLON (;)

## MEANING

The main task of the semicolon (;) is to mark a break that is stronger than a comma but not as final as a full stop. It's used between two main clauses that balance each other and are too closely linked to be made into separate sentences. E.g.:

*Call me tomorrow; you can give me an answer then.*

*We have paid our dues; we expect all the privileges listed in the contract.*



# USAGE

**Use 1:** A semicolon should be used only if the dependent clause comes after the independent clause. *E.g. (Incorrect) Although they tried; they failed. (Correct) Although they tried, they failed.*

**Use 2:** When a sentence has a series, use a semicolon if each unit has to be further divided by a comma. *E.g. The students met people from California, USA; Osaka, Japan; Melbourne, Australia and other places as well.*

**Use 3:** Use the semicolon before 'however', 'namely', 'for instance', 'that is', 'i.e.', 'for example', 'therefore'. *E.g. There are four types of chocolate desserts on display; namely, white chocolate, milk chocolate, light chocolate and dark chocolate desserts, all created by our best chefs.*

**Use 4:** Do not capitalise words after a semicolon unless it's a proper noun. *E.g. She is waiting here; you are late.*

# OXFORD OR SERIAL COMMA (,)

The 'Oxford comma' is an optional comma before the word 'and' at the end of a list:

We sell books, videos, and magazines.

Also known as the 'serial comma', not all writers and publishers use it. However, it clarifies the meaning of a sentence when the items in a list are not single words. E.g.

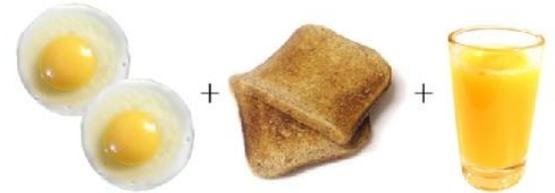
*These items are available in black and white, red and yellow, and blue and green.*

The Oxford comma got its name from the printers, readers, and editors at Oxford University Press.

*Why should you use the Oxford comma?*

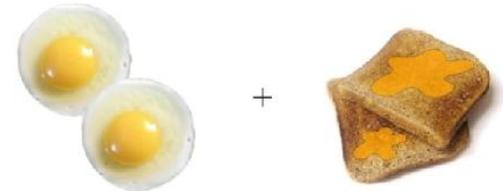
WITH:

I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.



WITHOUT:

I had eggs, toast and orange juice.



# Exercise 1

**These sentences have used the colon mark incorrectly, write the correct answer for us:**

- 1) The cereal contained: fruit, almonds and honey.
- 1) You have only one choice: Eat what's on your plate or stay hungry.
- 1) I can see: only 2 things, a car and a lamp-post.
- 1) Our teacher used to say: "Where there's a will, there's a way!"
- 1) Could you bring me: tomatoes, bread and basil leaves.

# Exercise 2

**In the below sentences, choose after which word would you put the semicolon mark. Type your answer to the trainer:**

- 1) It is hot outside I will have to bring my sunglasses with me.
- 1) John doesn't speak Spanish therefore he had to hire an interpreter on his trip to Granada.
- 1) She planted roses in her garden they were beautiful.
- 1) All my toys are kept in the attic they are going to be donated to the orphanage.
- 1) She finished her chores late she was exhausted.

# Exercise 3

**In the below sentences choose whether the serial comma is needed or not. Rewrite the sentence with the correct punctuation:**

- 1) Sarah made her favourite muffins, butter, chocolate chip and cherry.
- 1) Paul loves the classics Treasure Island, and Robinson Crusoe.
- 1) I wish to thank my parents, Sidney Cooper and God.
- 1) In 2016 Tom Hanks appeared in the movies Inferno, Sully, A Hologram for the King, My Big Fat Greek Wedding-Part II, and California Typewriter.
- 1) Sheila told Mary: 'I was travelling with my mother, a novelist and florist.' Mary replied, 'Oh! I did not know, your mother was a florist as well!'