

# Semicolons

The semicolon has three primary functions:

- 1) To combine two closely related complete sentences (independent clauses) which are not joined by a conjunction.
- 2) To separate complete sentences (independent clauses) that are joined by a conjunctive adverb.
- 3) To separate items in a list when commas alone would be confusing.

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## 1) To combine closely related complete sentences (independent clauses) which are not joined by a conjunction.

Example: The man was wet; he was standing in the rain without an umbrella.

In this example, there are two complete sentences (independent clauses):

#1: “*The man was wet.*” (independent clause)

#2 “*He was standing in the rain without an umbrella.*” (independent clause)

These clauses are separated by a *semicolon*.

Directions: Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to combine the following independent clauses.

- 1) I am hot I am wearing a sweater and a jacket.
- 2) The president was very popular he easily won the election.
- 3) I cannot buy a new car I do not have much money.

## 2) To separate complete sentences (independent clauses) that are joined by a conjunctive adverb.

Here is a list of common conjunctive adverbs:

in addition	thus	nevertheless	therefore	still	however	indeed	furthermore	then
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**Example:** Jane likes fruit; however, she does not like apples.

In this example, there are two complete sentences (independent clauses):

#1: “*Jane likes fruit.*” (independent clause)

#2 “*She does not like apples.*” (independent clause)

These clauses are separated by a *semicolon* and the conjunctive adverb “*however*”.

**Directions:** Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb to combine the following independent clauses.

- 1) I am wearing a sweater and a jacket \_\_\_\_\_ I am cold.
- 2) The old dog is blind \_\_\_\_\_ it is deaf.
- 3) Mix all the ingredients \_\_\_\_\_ put the batter in the oven.

**3) To separate items in a list when commas alone would be confusing.**

**Example:** The school specializes in three fields of study: economics, the study of the economy; philosophy, the study of thought; and anthropology, the study of mankind.

**Directions:** Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to separate items in a list in the following sentences.

- 1) The answers to the test are: 1, A 2, D 3, F and 4, B.
- 2) The group was composed of three young people: Mary, who was 32 years old Javier, who was 28 years old and Ming, who was 17 years old.
- 3) On the trip, we drove through Tampa, Florida Wichita, Kansas and Fresno, California.