Punctuation Quick Tips

✦ 1 Use for the Semicolon

1. **Semicolon: Complete thought; complete thought.**

Use between complete sentences instead of a period for thoughts that are closely related.

Example: I used to love cooking new recipes; now I'm too busy and eat at a taco stand every day.

✦ 3 Uses for the Colon

1. **Explanation Colon: Complete thought: complete thought.**

Use between complete sentences instead of a period. What comes after the colon should **define, explain, or elaborate on what came before the colon**. If it doesn't, use a semicolon.

Example: It was a difficult recovery: to begin with he had to relearn how to walk.

2. **List Colon: Complete thought: list, list, list.**

Use to introduce lists. Make sure that what comes before the list is a whole thought.

> **Complete thought: word, word, word.**

Example: The restaurant is known for 3 kinds of Japanese food: sushi, ramen, and yakitori.

> **Complete thought: phrase, phrase, phrase.**

Example: I'm planning on doing 3 things when I visit San Francisco: eat dim sum, check out Fisherman's Wharf, and take a tour of Alcatraz.

> **Complete thought: whole sentence, whole, sentence, whole sentence**.

Example: "There is a series of questions that the founding generation faced, that we still face: Who gets to participate? How do you actually get these people to participate? How do you inspire people?" (Osnos, 2016).

3. **Emphasis Colon: Complete thought: word or phrase you want to emphasize.**

Use to emphasize a single word or a phrase (creates suspense)

Example: Politicians who want young people to vote for them should focus on one thing: lowering college tuition.

Example: After weeks of anticipation, she finally received her exam results: high pass.

- Note: The dash can also be used for this.

✦ 2 Uses for the Dash

1. **Emphasis Dash: Complete thought—surprising information.**

Use to introduce surprising information. Make sure that what comes before the list is a whole thought.

Example: Ken has two goals after graduating — climbing Mt. Everest and publishing his novel.

- Note: You can also use a colon for this. The dash is more dramatic than the colon so what comes after the dash should be exciting or surprising.

2. **Extra Info. Dash: Sentence—extra information—sentence.**
   > **Sentence—extra information.**

Use to separate extra information from the rest of your sentence (like parentheses or commas).

Example: This book has persuaded me that I should give more—significantly more—to help those less fortunate.

Example: This material may be new to most readers — it was new to me until recently! — but there are a variety of ways to make it accessible.

Summing up:

Comma: *conventional*	I like cake, and he likes pie.	
Period: *conventional*	I like cake. He likes pie.	Also see our handout: "5 Useful Rules for Commas"
Semicolon: *conventional and academic*	I like cake; he likes pie.	
Colon: *more stylish*	I like cake: I am baking one tonight.	
Dash: *more dramatic*	I like cake—but not chocolate cake.	