

Punctuation:

Commas, Semicolons, and Colons

(,) Commas are used -

to combine two complete independent clauses (with a conjunction)	Saul grabbed his rain coat, but it ended up being sunny.
to set off introductory phrases from the rest of a sentence	Before cooking dinner, the chef gathered the ingredients.
to indicate added detail in a sentence (parenthetical phrase)	My best friend, Anne, gave me the tickets.
to separate words in a list	She needs to pick up milk, sugar, beans, and rice.
to set off a direct quotation	Dr. O'neil wrote, "I respect the older guys," in his blog.

(;) Semicolons are used –

to combine two complete independent clauses (without a conjunction)	Anne was tired; the moon rose as she finished her assignment.
to combine two complete independent clauses (with a conjunctive adverb)	Saul ate too many chili peppers; consequently, he started hiccupping.
to separate parts of a compound sentence with several commas	Americans keep various pets such as birds, crabs, and snakes; yet dogs, cats, and fish are the most common.
to separate words in a detailed list	I drive in Nashua, New Hampshire; Lowell, Massachusetts; and other towns on my way to school.

(:) Colons are used –

to introduce a list with an intended pause	You need to bring four items to your appointment: something to write with, your professor's instructions, your notes, and any work you have already done.
to introduce an explanation with an intended pause	One thing was wrong: the chef did not cook the beans!
to address somebody in a letter or e-mail	Dear Dr. O'neil: