

Using the Colon

In writing, the colon has three major functions.



First, it introduces a list when the list follows an independent clause.

Example:

We had healthy snacks today: fruit, nuts, and carrot sticks.



Second, the colon introduces a quotation when the quotation is not part of an independent clause.

Example:

I will quote the words of the wise Aesop: "Little friends may prove great friends."



Third, the colon introduces an explanation when the explanation is preceded by an independent clause.

Example:

She knew the right place to find the answer: the library.

Below is a variety of sentences that need a colon. Rewrite each sentence and add the colon.

1. The opening phrases of Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities" are memorable "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."
2. Just a few colored pencils were available green, orange and purple.
3. It was useless to wait any longer the last bus had left.
4. No one knows me like my mother not my sister, my best friend, or my father.
5. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. closed his famous speech with the words from a spiritual "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

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