

Punctuation – Semicolon

Punctuation – The Semicolon

A semicolon looks like a full stop on top of a comma (;).

It signals stronger a break than a comma.

But not as strong as a full stop.

In other words, it's somewhere between a comma and a full stop.

They are used to split list items when the list items contain commas.

They can be used to list instructions.

They are used to form compound sentences out of related clauses.

Semicolon – Examples #1

They are used to split list items when the list items contain commas.

Addresses can have commas in them, for example:

- I used to live in Denver, Colorado.
- “Over the last 10 years, I have lived in Denver, Colorado, Portland, Oregon, Seattle, Washington, and Washington, D.C.”.
- “Over the last 10 years, I have lived in Denver, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; and Washington, D.C.”.

Semicolon – Examples #2

They can be used to list instructions.

➤ “Your homework is as follows: (1) task one; (2) task two; (3) task three.”

➤ There are a few tasks we need to complete before the next meeting:

- task one;
- task two; and
- task three.

Semicolon – Examples #3

They are used to form compound sentences out of related clauses.

- “I hope the traffic is light. We don’t want to be late for the meeting.”
- “I hope the traffic is light, as we don’t want to be late for the meeting.”
- “I hope the traffic is light; we don’t want to be late for the meeting.”