

Lesson Topic: Colons, Dashes, and Semicolons

Objective

Students will be able to write sentences using dashes, colons, and semicolons.

Lesson Outline

1. Objective
2. Introduction: Explain the uses of a colon
3. Teacher Model: Combine sentences with a colon
4. Individual Practice: Combine sentences with a colon
5. Explain how to type a dash
6. Introduction: Explain the uses of a dash
7. Paired Practice: Write sentences using a dash
8. Introduction: Explain the uses of a semicolon.
9. Individual Practice: Combine sentences in a paragraph using a semicolon.
10. Wrap-Up

Optional Follow-up Activity

[Follow Up Activity Lesson 1: Colons, Dashes, and Semicolons](#)

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2.a

Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2.a

Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2.b

Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation.

Prerequisites

Students can write complete sentences.

Students can use commas in a list.

Students can use parentheses.

Slide 1/10

By the end of today's class, I will be able to:

- Write sentences using colons, dashes, and semicolons.

Objective

Introduce the objective of the lesson.

Say: Today, you will learn how to use colons, dashes, and semicolons. You can use these common punctuation marks to make your writing clearer and more interesting.

Say: Please read the objective for today's class.

Slide 2/10

1. Alexander Hamilton was fearless on the battlefield: he ran everywhere, firing cannons and ignoring enemy fire.

2. My favorite comic books are the old ones: Superman, Batman, and the Green Lantern.

Introduction

Explain how to use a colon to introduce lists and to add information.

Say: Let's start with the colon. A colon is a punctuation mark made of two dots, one above the other.

Ask a student to read the sentences out loud.

Say: Look at the sentences. What do you think the colon is used for?

Anticipated student responses:

- It tells you that information is going to follow.
- It introduces a list.

Say: Good thinking. A colon announces that more information will follow. Often, the sentence that follows makes the previous sentence more clear. The following sentence can be an example, or a list of examples.

Say: Notice that the part before the colon is a complete sentence, like "Alexander Hamilton was fearless." What follows the colon does not have to be a complete sentence. It can be a phrase or a list.

Slide 3/10: Interactive Slide

Teacher Model

The main character learns a difficult lesson.
The lesson is to put others before herself.



Teacher Models Response

Model how to combine two sentences with a colon

Say: Let's practice using a colon to improve our writing. On the screen you see two sentences.

Ask a student to read the sentences out loud.

Say: Those sentences are correct, but they sound awkward and repetitive together. I'm going to combine them with a colon to make my writing flow.

Say: Let's start with the first sentence.

In your Model your Answer box, type: The main character learns a difficult lesson

Say: This is a complete sentence, so I don't have to change anything. I notice that the second sentence gives more information about the first. This is a good opportunity to combine the sentence with a colon.

In your Model your Answer box, type: The main character learns a difficult lesson:

Say: Now I'm going to add the second sentence. I could add the entire sentence, or not. In this case, I don't need to say "the lesson is." The colon already told my reader that more information about the lesson is coming. Instead, I'll just add the phrase.

In your Model your Answer box, type: The main character learns a difficult lesson: to put others before herself.

Ask a student to read the new sentence out loud.

Slide 4/10: Interactive slide

Combine these sentences using a colon:

Abraham Lincoln had a surprising talent.

That talent was his wrestling skills.

Individual Practice

Ask students to combine two sentences using a colon.

Say: Now I'd like you to practice this by combining the two sentences on the screen.



Students Input Sentences

Discussion

Select 1-2 correct responses and 2-3 incorrect responses to display and discuss.

Ask the following questions:

- Does the sentence include a colon?
- Is there a complete sentence before the colon?
- Is the phrase after the colon repetitive?

Slide 5/10: Interactive Slide

How to type a dash:

PC: Alt + 0151

Mac: Shift + Option + Hyphen Key



Students Input Sentences

Introduction

Explain how to type a dash.

Say: Now let's talk about dashes. First, let's go over how to type a dash on your keyboard.

If using a PC, say: To type a dash, press "alt" on your keyboard, and then the numbers 0151. Make sure to use the numbers to the right of your keyboard.

If using a Mac, say: Press the "shift" key and the "option" key at the same time. Then press the "hyphen" key.

Say: If neither of those options work, you can type two hyphens in place of a dash for now. But make sure you use the correct form in formal writing. Can everyone enter a dash in the response box?

Check that students have typed the dash correctly.

The correct dash for sentences is this length —

The short dash for numbers is this length -

The hyphen is this length -

Slide 6/10

The judge smiled and said two words—"Case dismissed."

Because of Da Vinci's accomplishments—in painting, architecture, and science—some call him the most talented person who ever lived.

Introduction

Explain how to use a dash to add surprising information and to set off additional information.

Say: Ok, let's look at the uses now. What do the dashes seem to be doing?

Anticipated student responses:

- They connect two parts of a sentence.
- They tell you that something's coming—and it may be surprising.
- They announce some added information.

Say: You're all very close. Like a colon, a dash announces that more information is on the way. However, a dash is less formal than a colon and more dramatic. What follows the dash is often surprising.

Say: A dash can also be used like parentheses, as in the second sentence. Here, more examples are separated from the rest of the sentence with dashes on each side.

Say: Here's the main takeaway: A dash is like a colon or like parentheses, but more dramatic and surprising.

Slide 7/10: Interactive Slide

Write a sentence using a dash.



Students Input Sentences

Paired Practice

Ask students to write sentences using a dash.

Say: Now I'd like you to practice this by writing an original sentence. Turn to your partner and write a sentence that uses a dash together. When you're finished, submit the sentence on one computer.

Discussion

Select 2 correct responses and 2-3 incorrect responses to display and discuss.

Discuss the errors the students made in the incorrect responses.

Ask the following questions:

- Is the dash used to signal that more information is on the way?
- Is what follows the dash surprising?

Slide 8/10

When to use a semicolon

1. That puppy is very cute; he's also very destructive.

Introduction

Explain how to use a semicolon to connect closely related sentences.

Say: Here's the last one. On your screen, there's a sentence that uses a semicolon.

Have a student read the sentence aloud.

Say: Good. Semicolons connect two ideas that are so closely related the author wants them to be part of the same sentence.

Say: But there's a grammatical rule about semicolons that gets many writers in trouble. Listen closely: both parts of the sentence must be complete sentences.

Slide 9/10

Find two closely related sentences and combine them with a semicolon.

Once my son got glasses, his grades improved. Before, he couldn't see the board. He had to squint. Now, everything is clear, and he has fewer headaches. Only one thing matters to him, though: the color of his frames.



Students Input Sentences

Individual Practice

Ask students to combine sentences in a paragraph using a semicolon.

Say: Let's practice this. Read through this paragraph. Choose two sentences that are closely related. Combine them with a semicolon, and then submit your new sentence in the response box.

Discussion

Select 2-3 correct responses and 2-3 incorrect responses to display and discuss.

Discuss the errors the students made in the incorrect responses.

Ask the following questions:

- Is each part able to stand on its own as a complete sentence?

- Are the parts closely related?
- How can we improve this sentence?

Slide 10/10

Today I learned:

- A colon announces that more information is coming.
- A dash is like a colon or parenthesis— but dramatic!
- A semicolon connects two closely related sentences.

Wrap-up

Review what the students learned today.

Say: Let's review what you learned today.

Ask students to read the three bullet points out loud.

You can assign an independent practice activity that students can either complete now or later.

You can also pull aside the flagged students for small group instruction.

Say: Follow the instructions on your screen. If your screen says to begin the next activity, go ahead and begin it now. If your screen says to wait for instructions, please wait at your desk quietly for your next steps.