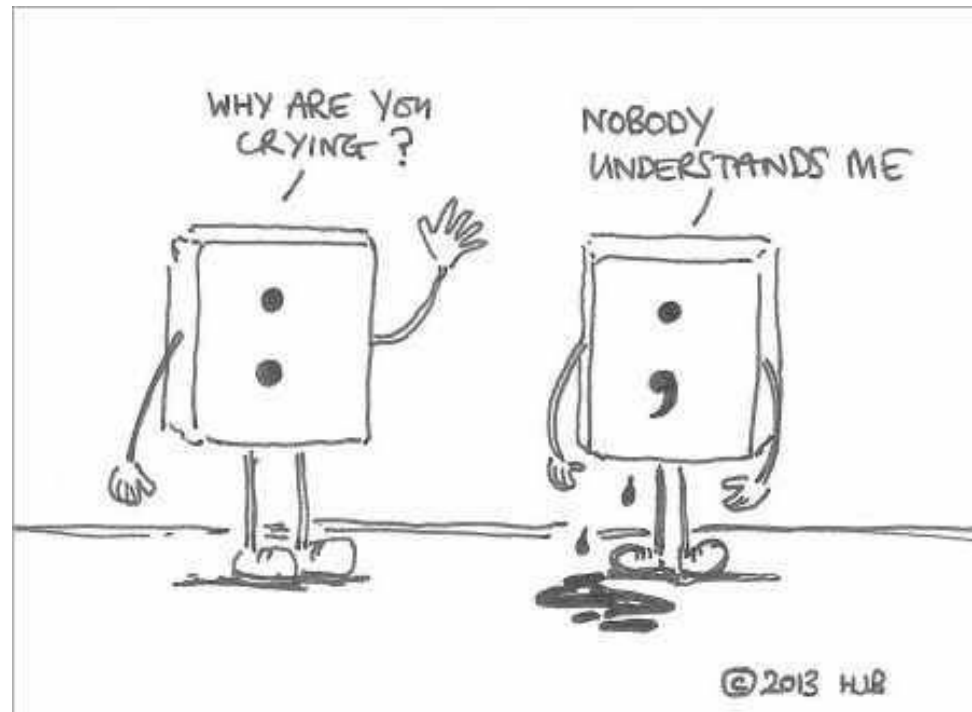
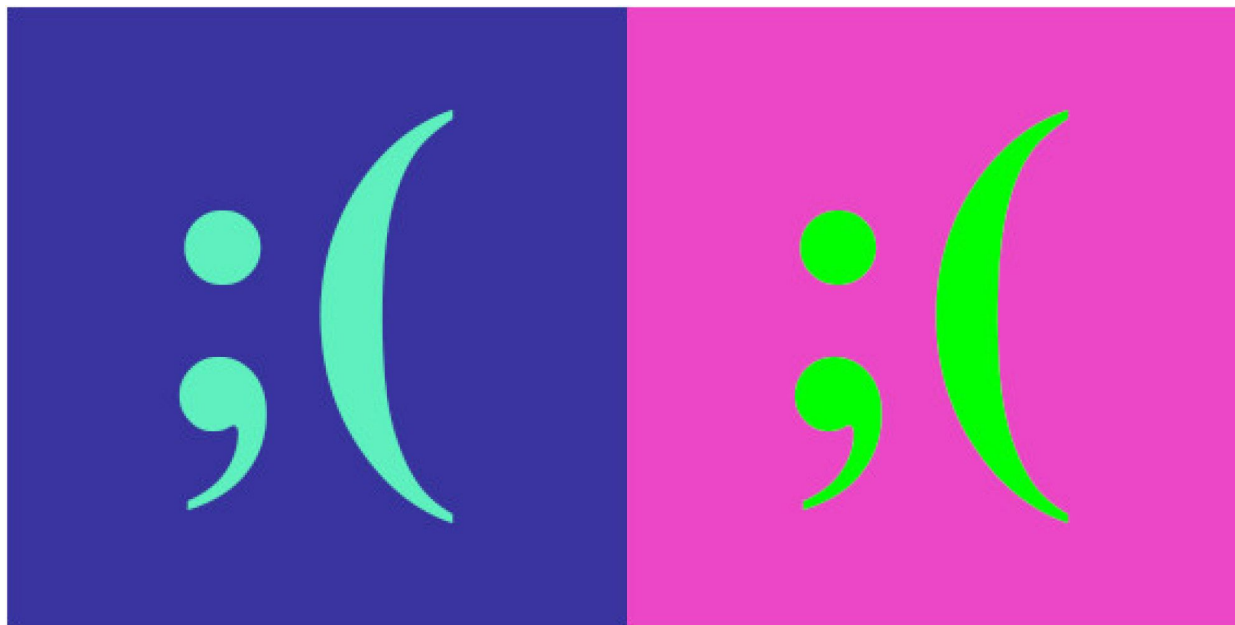


# The Semicolon (;)



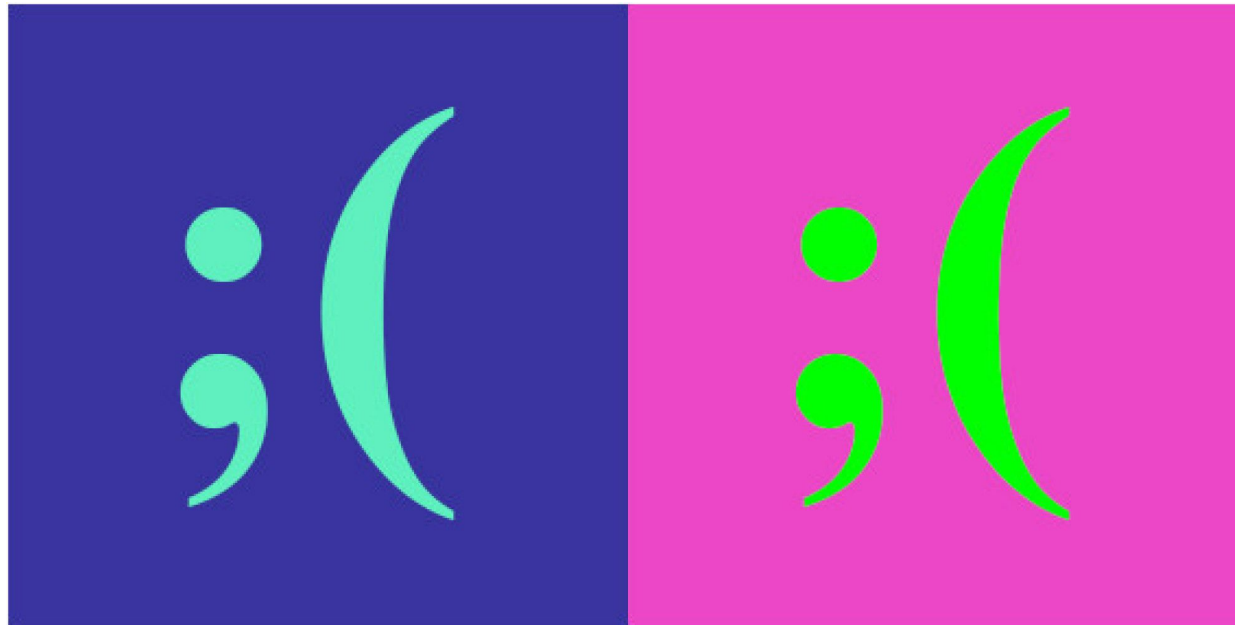
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No one understands the semicolon . . .



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\*unless maybe you're an English major, but still\*



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But actually, they're very easy to use!

Now for the BIG question . . . what does a semicolon do, exactly?

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a semicolon separates two independent clauses (or complete sentences) that are closely related in meaning.

(\*An independent clause must express a complete thought and contain at least a subject and a verb.)



So, in other words . . .

- If you can use a period correctly, then you can use a semicolon correctly.
- A semicolon is used just like a period, but it is used to separate two complete sentences when the sentences are closely related in meaning.

But why use a semicolon instead of a period?

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A semicolon is like a “soft” period, meaning you use it to connect sentences rather than separate them.

Example:

1. He came; he saw; he conquered.

Example:

1. He came; he saw; he conquered.

All three of these clauses are independent clauses (or complete sentences) on their own, but they are also closely related in meaning, so semicolons can be added between them.

They are independent clauses because they each contain at least a subject (or noun) and a verb, and they also each express a complete thought.

Where does the semicolon go?

2. His lips are trembling he's about to cry, I think.

Where does the semicolon go?

2. His lips are trembling; he's about to cry, I think.

Where does the semicolon go?

3. She always does her best that's one reason everyone admires her.



## Where does the semicolon go?

3. She always does her best; that's one reason everyone admires her.

Great Job!



But . . .

In what ways do we see semicolons  
being misused?

## Ways Semicolons are Misused:

- When they are used as commas  
(commas and semicolons are NOT interchangeable)
- When they are assumed to create “longer pauses” in writing for dramatic effect  
(spoiler alert: they don’t!)
- Etc. . .

## Is the semicolon correct or incorrect?

1. I would go with you; but I have too much work to do.

Is the semicolon correct or **incorrect**?

1. I would go with you; but I have too much work to do.

**\*This should be a comma, not a semicolon.**

Is the semicolon correct or incorrect?

“I’m still angry with Sue; I don’t want to see her.”

Is the semicolon **correct** or incorrect?

“I’m still angry with Sue; I don’t want to see her.”

**\*This separates two independent clauses! They both are complete thoughts and contain subjects and verbs.**



Is the semicolon correct or incorrect?

I thought that I could change him; that I could make him a better person.

Is the semicolon correct or **incorrect**?

I thought that I could change him; that I could make him a better person.

**\*The second clause is not a complete thought!**

Is the semicolon correct or incorrect?

I went to John's last night; I like cereal.

Is the semicolon correct or **incorrect**?

I went to John's last night; I like cereal.

The two clauses are both independent, but they are not closely related in meaning! (Going to John's has nothing to do with liking cereal!)

# Fun Fact: The Semicolon Project

- A non-profit organization dedicated to suicide and mental health awareness
- Based on the symbolism of the semicolon: *"Where the sentence could have ended, but didn't."*
- "Semicolons allow sentences to go on much longer than they otherwise would. . . And that's the motivation behind the semicolon tattoo: it marks a place where a sentence could have finished, but didn't. It kept going. For those of us struggling with mental health issues such as depression and anxiety there are many points in the sentence where it feels like we could use a full stop. We don't have to. We have the semicolon; we can pause but keep going."



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# Photo Sources

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