SEMICOLONS AND COLONS

; SEMICOLONS SEPARATE

1. Use a semicolon to separate two complete thoughts (a subject and verb that could stand alone as sentences) without using a conjunction such as and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet:

   The Writing Center is air-conditioned; we have grammar and mechanics class in there.
   
   compared to
   
   The Writing Center is air-conditioned, so we have grammar and mechanics class in there.

2. Use a semicolon to separate items in a list or series when the items themselves use commas as part of their meaning:

   In alphabetical order by last name, the first three students in the Discourse class are Dorothy Cao, New York; Erin Cook, Akwesasne; and Cornelia DeLee, Syracuse.

   Three architecture firms are competing for the bid: Perez, Philips, and Santiago; Meredith and McNeal; and Tyler, Logan, and Wallace.

: COLONS CONNECT...AND INTRODUCE

1. Use a colon to connect additional information—often of a surprising, explanatory, or amplifying nature—to the end of a related complete thought:

   Zelda had a sudden thought: maybe the paper she was working so hard on wasn’t due until tomorrow night.

2. Use a colon to connect a full quotation from a source to a sentence that introduces it and/or explains its significance:

   According to Richard Torres, one line of Sylvia Plath’s “Lady Lazarus” refers to the plight of repeatedly sinking into depression during her life: “I’ve done it again/ One year in every ten I’ve managed it” (13).

3. Use a colon to introduce a list:

   The governor invited top thinkers to his conference on education: Masiel Veras, Nertila Koni, and Yongquan Wang.

   However, do NOT use a colon before a list if the list is immediately preceded by a verb or preposition for which the items in the list are objects:
   
   The governor invited Masiel Veras, Nertila Koni, and Yongquan Wang to his conference on education.
   
   The faculty members will travel with Masiel, Nertila, and Yongquan.