



The Semicolon

There are several instances where it is useful to use a semicolon in a sentence.

Use a semicolon to connect closely related thoughts

Original sentences: Whales are very intelligent. They have language and culture.

With a semicolon: Whales are very intelligent; they have language and culture.

Grammar note: These two thoughts can be expressed as two complete sentences, as in the first example. When joined by a semicolon, the two thoughts become one compound sentence. The part after the semicolon begins with a small letter.

Use a semicolon before connecting words

You can also use a semicolon before connecting words, such as however, consequently or moreover. The connecting word or phrase also needs a comma after it:

I think; therefore, I am.

We had a few small problems; however, the meeting went quite well.

We got more snow than usual this winter; as a result, there may be more flooding in spring.

Using semicolons in a series:

Another use for the semicolon is to separate items in a series, also known as a super list. Semicolons are not used in a simple series, such as "eggs, cheese, and milk"; however, they should be used if the items in the series are complex and have commas within them:

At her concert, Joan will play *The Nutcracker Suite*, a collection of songs by Tchaikovsky; "Nocturne", a famous piano piece by Chopin; and the *Hungarian Dances*, an upbeat set by Brahms.

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