
Semicolons

A semicolon is a useful mark of punctuation that can strengthen the logical connection between related ideas. Writers often use semicolons in an essay

In the example provided above, the use of the semicolon and *however* signals the strong logical relationship between the two independent clauses: the first clause makes a statement, and the second clause provides a sharp contrast to that initial statement.

You should make sure the conjunctive adverb you use accurately names the logical relationship between the two clauses. Writers can get into trouble when they connect two ideas by using an illogical connector:

Not logical: I had to do an incredible amount of homework last night; nonetheless, I could not go to Ben's party.

In this sentence, *nonetheless* does not logically connect the two independent clauses because *nonetheless* should be used to show a contradiction, not a cause-and-effect relationship. The sentence can be improved through the use of a logical connector like *therefore*, which shows a result.

Logical: I had to do an incredible amount of homework last night; therefore, I could not go to Ben's party.

Using a Semicolon to Identify Items in a List with other Punctuation

Just as semicolons help readers distinguish ideas in a compound sentence, semicolons also distinguish items in a list that already contains other punctuation. Usually, commas separate items in lists, but when multiple items also carry marks of punctuation, lists of items can become hard to read.

Hard to distinguish: I'm going on a vacation with Samantha, my boss, Andrew, my coworker, Sarah, my cousin, and Alyssa, my best friend.

The punctuation in this list is confusing. Am I going on vacation with four people (Samantha, Andrew, Sarah, and Alyssa) or seven people (Samantha, my boss, Andrew, a coworker, Sarah, my cousin, and Alyssa)?

Activity 2

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America, and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides—and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my