

Using Semicolons

Because semicolons are little more than grammatical equal signs, it is useful to know the rudiments of grammar when placing them. If you cannot identify independent clauses within a sentence, you will have trouble with semicolons. In most cases, they are used to connect independent clauses that are not joined by coordinating conjunctions. Beyond suggesting that two clauses are closely related and grammatically equivalent, semicolons convey no meaning.

When using conjunctive adverbs to open a second independent clause – words such as however, nevertheless, therefore, and accordingly – a semicolon comes at the end of the first independent clause and before the conjunctive adverb; a comma follows the adverb.

Examples with coordinating conjunctions

1. The walk around Lake Fred is always worthwhile, and it should be done at least once a week.
2. Rainy and cold periods may make the circuit less frequent, but it should be completed regularly.
3. Yesterday I saw a turtle making a nest, so I knew springtime was upon us.

Examples with semicolons

1. The walk around Lake Fred is always worthwhile; it should be done at least once a week.
2. Rainy and cold periods may make the circuit less frequent; it should be completed regularly.
3. Yesterday I saw a turtle making a nest; I knew springtime was upon us.

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Examples with conjunctive adverbs

1. The walk around Lake Fred is always worthwhile; therefore, it should be done at least once a week.
2. Rainy and cold periods may make the circuit less frequent; nevertheless, it should be completed regularly.
3. Yesterday I saw a turtle making a nest; accordingly, I knew springtime was upon us.

Sample Sentences

Correctly punctuate the following sentences. Do not add words; just change the punctuation.

1. I walk through the aisles of my local grocery store sometimes strange events occur.
2. Last week I was standing in the cereal aisle standing ten feet away was a life-sized container of Quaker one-minute oats.
3. It stood nearly six feet tall however it did not appear alarming.
4. The benign features of the Quaker were soothing, nevertheless standing next to it made for a strange moment.
5. My old grocery store refused to stock cherry yogurt the new store, does just fine in this department.
6. Cherry yogurt however you look at it is not everyone's favorite.

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7. I liked it the store manager, however did not.

8. I used to ask for it whenever I shopped at the store the manager would hide behind sales items when she saw me approach.

9. This new grocery stocks it without asking, accordingly I like it much better than its predecessor.

10. I also like peach yogurt however I far prefer cherry.