

## Colons

### LEARN FOUR USES FOR THE COLON (:)

A colon (:) is a mark of punctuation that appears within a sentence. Never use a colon at the end of a sentence.

#### USE A COLON

1. Between independent (main) clauses.
2. After an independent clause to introduce information.
3. To introduce direct quotations.
4. For other purposes.

#### THE COLON BETWEEN INDEPENDENT (MAIN) CLAUSES

Sometimes, you can use an independent clause to explain, add to, or clarify the meaning of another. You should separate these clauses with a colon.

*Stephen King has been busy; he has written more than 27 novels since 1974.*

#### THE COLON AFTER AN INDEPENDENT CLAUSE TO INTRODUCE INFORMATION

You can place a colon after an independent clause to introduce information naming something in that clause.

*Alaska is rich in several natural resources: oil, gold, copper, and uranium.*

*Only one city is called "eternal": Rome.*

#### THE COLON TO INTRODUCE DIRECT QUOTATIONS

You can use a colon to introduce a [quotation](#).

*The prisoner pleaded with his accusers: "I am innocent. Innocent, I tell you!"*

**CAUTION:** Don't use a colon to introduce a direct quotation if that quotation is needed to make the sentence you're writing complete.

**Not:** *Pope wrote that: "to err is human."*

**But:** *Pope wrote that "to err is human."*

#### THE COLON FOR OTHER PURPOSES

1. In the salutation of a business letter:

*Dear Professor Johnson:*

2. To separate hours and minutes:

*10:55 P.M.*

3. Before a subtitle:

*Thomas More: A Biography*

**CAUTION:** Do not use a colon to separate objects or from. An [object](#) is the receiver of an action. A complement comes after the verb and describes the.

**Object**

**Not:** *She bought; a saw, a hammer, and a drill.*

**But:** *She bought a saw, a hammer, and a drill.*

**Complement**

**Not:** *He is; a good speller but a bad typist.*

**But:** *He is a good speller but a bad typist.*

Sample Quiz questions:

1. Click on the sentence that uses correct punctuation. a. The choir sang the minister's favorite song: "Amazing Grace."  
b. The choir sang: the minister's favorite song: "Amazing Grace."  
c. The choir sang: the minister's favorite song "Amazing Grace."

Answer: a. The choir sang the minister's favorite song: "Amazing Grace."

2. Click on the sentence that uses correct punctuation. a. Goldie's Café: serves my favorite dish: Hungarian goulash.  
b. Goldie's Café serves my favorite dish: Hungarian goulash.  
c. Goldie's Café serves my favorite dish Hungarian goulash.

Answer: b. Goldie's Café serves my favorite dish: Hungarian goulash.