

Colons



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The **colon (:)** is a strong directional signal. The colon gives further emphasis to what has already been said and calls attention to what is to follow an opening statement. It may introduce words, phrases, clauses, or any combination or series of these. The colon usually follows an independent clause.

To introduce a list

Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list, especially after a statement that uses words such as *these*, *the following*, or *as follows*.

Example: John has lived in these three cities: New Orleans, Jackson, and Atlanta.

Example: The following students were awarded academic scholarships: Thomas White, John Black, Sara Smith, Bob Jackson, and Becky Ward.

Do not use a colon to introduce a list if the list immediately follows a verb or a preposition.

Example: The students in attendance were John Ward, Sara Smith, and Thomas White.

Example: Every department was represented except for customer service, technical support, and human resources.

To introduce an explanation, expansion, or elaboration

Use a colon to join two independent clauses when the second independent clause provides an explanation, an expansion, or an elaboration of the first.

Example: The new law program is very intimidating: it requires long hours of hard work and dedication.

To introduce quotations

Use a colon to introduce a long or formal quotation after a complete sentence.

Example: Many people remember President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous statement from his first inaugural address: "Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

In salutations, time notations, titles, and biblical references

Colons are also used in the salutations of letters, exact time notation, titles and subtitles, and biblical references.

Example:	Salutation	To whom it may concern:
	Time notation	10:30 a.m.
	Title and subtitle	Teaching in Progress: Theories, Practices, and Scenarios
	Biblical reference	Genesis 37:31-35

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