

Strategies for Writing

LSLT

To help me remember when to use colons and semicolons.

Lists and colons.

- Use a colon to set off a list if the clause can stand as a sentence by itself (e.g., We will study all five great lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.).
- Do not set off a list if the clause introducing the list cannot stand as a sentence by itself (e.g., The five great lakes are Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.).

Salutation and colons.

- Use a colon following the salutation or greeting in a business letter (e.g., Dear Mr. Wilson:).

Lists and semicolons.

- Use semicolons for items that would be confusing if they were set apart by commas (e.g., We invited Mrs. Jones, Karen's mother; Mrs. Smith, Karen's aunt; and Mrs. Parker, Karen's teacher.).

Two independent clauses and semicolons.

- Use a semicolon with two independent clauses, which are not connected with a conjunction (e.g., Think carefully before responding; your future may depend upon your answer.).