

## Colons and semi-colons

### About this activity

Help learners know when to use colons and semicolons.

#### Stage 1: Present examples

Write these sentences on the board with the underlined part and ask: “What do you notice about the underlined (bold) part of the sentences?”

- To make this dish you need the following ingredients: potatoes, peas, corn, butter, salt and pepper.
- She said: “Wait here.”
- At last, he told us what was wrong: he was tired.

To help learners:

- ask focussed questions (e.g. What can you see in each sentence? What can you see in sentence a? What does the second part of sentence c do?) Use L1 if necessary.

Next, write these sentences on the board and ask: “What do you notice about the underlined part of the sentences?”

- Florence likes science; her sister prefers maths.
- Kima had a big meal; however, he is already hungry again.

To help learners:

- ask focused questions (e.g. What can you see in each sentence? Can you make two separate sentences in each example?) Use L1 if necessary.

#### Stage 2: Take feedback

Ask learners to share their feedback on what they noticed in the examples. Some key points you might want to share with them include:

We use a colon:

- to introduce a list (1a).
- before someone speaks (1b).
- to break the second half of a sentence when it explains or expands the first half (1c).

We use a semi-colon:

- when both parts of the sentence are equal (1d).
- to replace a full stop before words like ‘however’, ‘therefore’, ‘nevertheless’ etc (1e).
- When we speak, we pause when we have a semi-colon or colon.

Traditionally, we count to 1 for a comma, 2 for a semi-colon, 3 for a colon and 4 for a full stop.

**Stage 3: Use the  
grammar****a. Colon or semi-colon?**

Write the following sentences on the board but without the colon or semi-colon. Ask your learners to decide where to put a colon or semi-colon.

1. People who have to wear a uniform for work include: policemen, firefighters, nurses and soldiers.
2. Rejoice didn't get enough sleep; therefore, she was very tired.
3. The teacher said: "Don't forget to do your homework."
4. Babou enjoys watching TV; his brother prefers reading.
5. Finally, we knew what had happened: he had missed the bus.

**b. Is it correct?**

Write up some sentences with colons and semi-colons. Some are correct and some are wrong. Say: "Which of the sentences are right and which are wrong? Correct the ones that are wrong."

1. We knew who would win the game: the Chiefs.
2. He visited three cities; Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos.
3. She made too many mistakes; she failed the test.
4. Let's go to the library: there are some books I'd like to borrow.
5. My mother bought a few items at the market; a chicken, some onions, okra and a lemon.

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