

COLONS

What are colons?

- A colon (:) is a punctuation mark that signals readers to a close connection between the statement before the colon and what follows after it. Colons are used to show a significant division in a sentence. They are more powerful than a comma.

How are colons used?

- Colons can be used to introduce a list that categorizes or explains.
 - *Correct: Our children have a bedtime routine: brush teeth, read a book, and go to bed.*
 - *Correct: Two topics will be mentioned: the new training and the revised PowerPoint.*
- Colons can be used to show emphasis or importance.
 - *Correct: Only one thing stands between me and graduation: my final paper.*
- Colons can be used in business letters or formal letters.
 - *Correct: Dear Sir:*
 - *A colon always follows the greeting in business letters or formal letters.*
 - *Correct: Dear Rebecca:*
 - *In business letters or formal letters, a colon follows the recipients' name even if you are addressing them by their first name.*
- Colons can also be used to separate titles from subtitles.
 - *Correct: Data Entry: How to Enter Data into Microsoft Excel*
- Colons can also be used to indicate clock time and to separate numbers.
 - *Clock time: 8:30 A.M.*
- Colons can also be used in references or citations.
 - *Psalms: 14:22*
 - *Footnote: Author, Title of Book, Publisher City: Publisher. Year Published, page.*

A rule to follow when using colons:

- Colons (:) are placed outside of quotation marks (“ ”)
 - *Correct: Jessie crossed the street and shouted: "Has anyone seen a brown dog? I cannot seem to find my dog anywhere."*

Examples of properly & improperly placed colons:

- Colons have to be placed properly. Below are two examples of what to avoid when using colons.
 - *Correct: I need four items from the store: eggs, bread, cheese, and milk.*
 - *This is correct because the verb is not separated from its objects.*
 - *Also correct because it introduces a list.*
 - *Incorrect: Four items that I need from the store are: eggs, bread, cheese, and milk.*
 - *This is incorrect because the verb should not be separated from its objects.*

- Correct: The train will be making several stops: New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.
 - This is correct because the verb is not separated from its objects.
 - Also correct because it introduces a list.
- Incorrect: I might take the train to New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.
 - This is incorrect because a preposition should not be separated from its objects.

References

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