The Semicolon ;

The semicolon (;) separates two clauses of equal importance in a sentence. It is sometimes used to separate items in a series. The following list explains when and where to use semicolons.

1. **Joining two main clauses**
   Use a semicolon when two main clauses in a sentence are not joined by *and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet* or another joining word.

   **Example**
   Most American schools offer only English education programs; schools in Canada provide both English and French immersion programs.

2. **Joining two clauses with a transitional expression**
   Use a semicolon between independent clauses linked with a transitional expression. Transitional expressions can be conjunctive adverbs such as *also, anyway, besides, still, otherwise, then, therefore, however*. They can also be transitional phrases such as *after all, as a result, even so, in addition, in other words*.

   **Example**
   I practiced all the kicks that the instructor taught; however, I never really learned to fight.

   If a transitional expression is placed in the middle or at the end of the second clause, the semicolon goes between the clauses.

   **Example**
   Most students learned how to fight; I, however, only learned how to kick.

3. **Separating items in a series**
   Use a semicolon between items in a series containing internal punctuation. By inserting semicolons at the major breaks, the writer helps the reader sort out the major groupings.

   **Example**
   Classic American novels are Huckleberry Finn, with the irrepressible Huck and his friend Jim; The Great Gatsby, with the mysterious Jay Gatsby and the enchanting Daisy; and the Catcher in the Rye, with the complex Holden Caufield.