

# 1. How to use a colon in a simple list

- A colon (:) not a semicolon (;) introduces a simple list: A, B, and C.
- The comma before the last item is optional, especially in American business English, but recommended.

## EXAMPLE

There are three main approaches: frequency, spatial, and temporal.

**approaches: frequency, spatial, and temporal.**

No space before a colon,  
but one space after it.

Put a comma between the listed terms.  
The second comma is optional.

## 2. How to use a semi-colon in a complex list

Use a semi-colon (;) to help make complex lists that contain commas in each item clear. You can also use semi-colons for list items that are complete sentences. Using only commas in the list below would make it almost unreadable.

### EXAMPLE

There were four professors assigned to the task force: Peter Jones, professor of Mathematics; Ronald Smith, professor of English; Kim Lee, professor of Education; and Wendy West, professor of Political Science.

Semi-colons separate the items in the list.

A colon introduces any type of list including a complex one.

# How to use a colon and a semi-colon in a list

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