Colons vs. Semicolons

**COLONS**

A colon can be used to...

- To introduce a list, a quotation, an example, or a noun. IMPORTANT! What falls on the left of the colon MUST be a complete sentence.

  Ex. We talked about many animals: dogs, giraffes, and elephants.

- Join two complete sentences when the second sentence summarizes or explains the first. Their content must be very closely related.

  Ex. Life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you’re gonna get.

**SEMI COLONS**

A semicolon can be used to...

- Separate items in a list, when those items already contain commas

  Ex. I bought shiny, ripe apples; sweet, juicy pears; and green, baby spinach.

- Join two complete sentences that are related to each other. A complete sentence is an independent clause; it can stand on its own. They have their own subject and verb.

  Ex. I went to the store today; I bought fruit and veggies.

**BASIC RULE:** What comes before the colon must be a complete sentence on its own.

**BASIC RULE:** You should be able to replace the semicolon with a period and still have two complete sentences.
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NOW YOU PRACTICE!
Correct each sentence by adding or removing a colon or semicolon.
HINT: some sentences are already correct.
Answers are at the bottom right corner.

1. I have a big test tomorrow, I can’t go out.

2. You asked for: forgiveness.

3. He is on his way therefore, we can’t leave yet.

4. The American flag has three colors: red, blue, white.

5. Don’t forget to eat breakfast, it’s important!

6. This is what I ate for breakfast: apples, yoghurt, oatmeal.

7. The window was open I looked out the window.

8. He reads a lot: books, poems, and short stories.

9. If you don’t understand, please ask questions.

10. I don’t like blue, ballpoint pens, pencils, or yellow, bright highlighters.

11. Spain is lovely hot weather and delicious food.