



The Writing Center at Bristol Community College

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Some User-Friendly Punctuation Rules

Comma:

- **Use a comma to mark a shift from introductory material to the main idea of a sentence:**
When her watch broke, she threw it away.
- **Use a comma to interrupt the main idea of a sentence with less significant information:**
Mr. Smith, the school custodian, makes certain that the blackboards are kept clean.
- **Use commas to separate items in a list:**
The teacher assigned parts to Jim, Sally, and Joe.
- **Avoid using comma splices (using commas between complete ideas or sentences):**
The car wouldn't start this morning, Sam called the tow truck.

Semi-colon:

- **Use a semi-colon to connect two complete thoughts if you want to suggest a connection between them:**
The temperature was frigid this morning; black ice was everywhere.

Colon:

- **Use a colon when you want to say "details to follow":**
The professor laid down the following rules on the first day of class: attend class, observe deadlines, and participate in discussions.

Apostrophe:

- **Use an apostrophe to indicate a contraction or to suggest possession:**
It's a very cold day.
Sally's car needs a washing.