Semicolons

The semicolon has three primary functions:

1) To combine two closely related complete sentences (independent clauses) which are not joined by a conjunction.

Example: The man was wet; he was standing in the rain without an umbrella.

In this example, there are two complete sentences (independent clauses):

#1: “The man was wet.” (independent clause)

#2 “He was standing in the rain without an umbrella.” (independent clause)

These clauses are separated by a semicolon.

Directions: Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to combine the following independent clauses.

1) I am hot I am wearing a sweater and a jacket.

2) The president was very popular he easily won the election.

3) I cannot buy a new car I do not have much money.

2) To separate complete sentences (independent clauses) that are joined by a conjunctive adverb.

Here is a list of common conjunctive adverbs:
Example: Jane likes fruit; however, she does not like apples.

In this example, there are two complete sentences (independent clauses):

#1: “Jane likes fruit.” (independent clause)

#2 “She does not like apples.” (independent clause)

These clauses are separated by a **semicolon** and the conjunctive adverb **“however”**.

Directions: Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb to combine the following independent clauses.

1) I am wearing a sweater and a jacket ____________ I am cold.

2) The old dog is blind ____________ it is deaf.

3) Mix all the ingredients ____________ put the batter in the oven.

3) **To separate items in a list when commas alone would be confusing.**

Example: The school specializes in three fields of study: economics, the study of the economy; philosophy, the study of thought; and anthropology, the study of mankind.

Directions: Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to separate items in a list in the following sentences.

1) The answers to the test are: 1, A 2, D 3, F and 4, B.

2) The group was composed of three young people: Mary, who was 32 years old Javier, who was 28 years old and Ming, who was 17 years old.

3) On the trip, we drove through Tampa, Florida Wichita, Kansas and Fresno, California.