

Colons

Rule 1

Use the colon after a complete sentence to introduce a list of items when introductory words such as *namely*, *for example*, or *that is* do not appear.

Examples:

You may be required to bring many items: sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing.

I want the following items: butter, sugar, and flour.

I want an assistant who can do the following: (1) input data, (2) write reports, and (3) complete tax forms.

Rule 2

A colon should not precede a list unless it follows a complete sentence; however, the colon is a style choice that some publications allow.

Examples:

If a waitress wants to make a good impression on her customers and boss, she should (a) dress appropriately, (b) calculate the bill carefully, and (c) be courteous to customers.

There are three ways a waitress can make a good impression on her boss and her customers:

(a) Dress appropriately.

(b) Calculate the bill carefully.

(c) Be courteous to customers.

I want an assistant who can (1) input data, (2) write reports, and (3) complete tax forms.

Rule 3

Capitalization and punctuation are optional when using single words or phrases in bulleted form. If each bullet or numbered point is a complete sentence, capitalize the first word and end each sentence with proper ending punctuation. The rule of thumb is to be consistent.

Examples:

I want an assistant who can do the following:

(a) input data,

(b) write reports, and

(c) complete tax forms.

The following are requested:

(a) Wool sweaters for possible cold weather.

(b) Wet suits for snorkeling.

(c) Introductions to the local dignitaries.

OR

The following are requested:

(a) wool sweaters for possible cold weather

(b) wet suits for snorkeling

(c) introductions to the local dignitaries

NOTE: With lists, you may use periods after numbers and letters instead of parentheses.

These are some of the pool rules:

- 1. Do not run.*
- 2. If you see unsafe behavior, report it to the lifeguard.*
- 3. Have fun!*

Rule 4

Use a colon instead of a semicolon between two sentences when the second sentence explains or illustrates the first sentence and no coordinating conjunction is being used to connect the sentences. If only one sentence follows the colon, do not capitalize the first word of the new sentence. If two or more sentences follow the colon, capitalize the first word of each sentence following.

Examples:

I enjoy reading: novels by Kurt Vonnegut are among my favorites.

Garlic is used in Italian cooking: It greatly enhances the flavor of pasta dishes. It also enhances the flavor of eggplant.

Rule 5

Use the colon to introduce a direct quotation that is more than three lines in length. In this situation, leave a blank line above and below the quoted material. Single space the long quotation. Some style manuals say to indent one-half inch on both the left and right margins; others say to indent only on the left margin. Quotation marks are not used.

Example:

The author of Touched, Jane Straus, wrote in the first chapter:

Georgia went back to her bed and stared at the intricate patterns of burned moth wings in the translucent glass of the overhead light. Her father was in “hyper mode” again where nothing could calm him down.

He’d been talking nonstop for a week about remodeling projects, following her around the house as she tried to escape his chatter. He was just about to crash, she knew.

Rule 6

Use the colon to follow the salutation of a business letter even when addressing someone by his/her first name. Never use a semicolon after a salutation. A comma is used after the salutation for personal correspondence.

Example:

Dear Ms. Rodriguez:

Source: “Colons.” *GrammarBook.com*. 2014. Web. 7 May 2014.