Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses that have a close logical relationship. Here’s how:

1.) A semicolon joins two independent clauses that have a close, logical relationship.

In the following examples, the semicolon suggests the logical connection between two independent clauses.

A truck hauling mirrors overturned on the highway; men with brooms arrived and cleaned up the mess.

*Logical connection:* When mirrors break on the highway, someone must clean up the mess.

Claire searched for the HEB receipt; she suspected she had been charged for items she did not have in her bag.

*Logical connection:* When one suspects being overcharged, receipts can serve as evidence.

2.) A semicolon can be used in a list of items that are separated by commas. Usually, this happens when listing names, places, dates, and descriptions.

Maggie visited Berlin, Germany; Monterrey, Mexico; Sydney, Australia; and Tokyo, Japan since she graduated from law school.

*Beware of common mistakes with semicolons.*

First, NEVER place a semicolon before any of the **FANBOYS** joining two independent clauses; only a comma is needed.

**WRONG**

Javier scored the winning goal; yet he was worried about the team’s performance.

**CORRECT**

Javier scored the winning goal, yet he was worried about the team’s performance.

Second, DO NOT use a semicolon to join a dependent clause to an independent clause; use a comma.
Sentence Variety II: Semicolon

When Javier scored the winning goal; he tore off his shirt and leaped into the arms of his teammates.

When Javier scored the winning goal, he tore off his shirt and leaped into the arms of his teammates.

Third, DO NOT use a semicolon to introduce a list or another idea that cannot stand on its own. Use a colon instead.

The man in the apartment upstairs has an annoying habit; vacuuming at 2 a.m.

The man in the apartment upstairs has an annoying habit: vacuuming at 2 a.m.

Practice 1

**Directions**: Correct semicolons errors in the following sentences. If the sentence is correct, do nothing.

1. Last night we watched a movie; *Legends of the Fall*.

2. The movie is based on Jim Harrison’s novella; but the two versions are quite different.

3. In the movie, the grizzly plays an important role; in the book, he’s only mentioned in passing and is not involved in Tristan’s death.

4. Jacob, while walking in the cafeteria, slipped on a puddle of water; landed flat on his back; and had his tray of mystery meat, mashed potatoes, and peas splatter on his face.

5. Even though Susannah seems to be the root of the conflict between the brothers in the movie; in the book, she is never engaged to Samuel.

6. Hollywood often changes a story in order to appeal to a broader audience; or to make the story fit into the standard two-hour movie time limit.

Practice 2

On a separate sheet of paper, write ten sentences that use a semicolon correctly. Two of the sentences must use the semicolon in a list.