Colons


A **colon** calls attention to what follows, introduces, and directs attention to an explanation, a summary, or a quotation.

**Basic Rules**

1. When a colon appears between two independent clauses, it signals that the second clause will explain or expand on the first.

   **Example:** For I had no brain tumor, no eyestrain, no high blood pressure, nothing wrong with me at all: I simply had migraine headaches.

2. A colon is also used after an independent clause to formally introduce a direct quotation.

   **Example:** Marcel Proust explained the importance of mindfulness in this way: “The true journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having fresh eyes.”

3. Although an independent clause should always precede the colon, a phrase may sometimes follow it, especially when the clause is acting as an introduction of the phrase.

   **Example:** I was finally confronted with what I had dreaded for months: the due date for the final balloon payment on my car loan.

4. A colon may introduce lists.

   **Example:** Three students received internships: Asa, Vanna, and Jack.
5. Avoid placing a colon between a verb and its complement or after the words “including” and “such as.” (Refer to the LB Brief Handbook, 4th ed., section 41c, pg. 332.)

**Incorrect:** The winners were: Asa, Vanna, and Jack.
**Correct:** The winners were Asa, Vanna, and Jack.

**Incorrect:** Many vegetarians do not eat dairy such as: butter and cheese.
**Correct:** Many vegetarians do not eat dairy such as butter and cheese.