Colons

A colon (:) is a punctuation mark used to introduce, explain, or call attention to information. Colons often signal that what follows will clarify, expand on, or illustrate what came before.

When To Use a Colon

- Between two independent clauses when the second clause explains or expands on the first.
    - **Example:** I had no brain tumor, no eyestrain, no high blood pressure, nothing wrong with me at all: I simply had migraine headaches.

- After an independent clause to introduce a formal 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."

- After an independent clause to introduce a phrase that completes or expands the idea.
    - **Example:** I was finally confronted with what I had dreaded for months: the due date for the final balloon payment on my car loan.

- To introduce a list, as long as the part before the colon is a complete sentence.
    - **Example:** Three students received internships: Asa, Vanna, and Jack.

When Not to Use a Colon

- Do NOT place a colon between a verb and its object or complement.
    - **Incorrect Example:** The winners were: Asa, Vanna, and Jack.
    - **Correct Example:** The winners were Asa, Vanna, and Jack.

- Do NOT use a colon after "including," "such as," or similar expressions.
    - **Incorrect Example:** Many vegetarians do not eat dairy such as: butter and cheese.
    - **Correct Example:** Many vegetarians do not eat dairy such as butter and cheese.

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Reference

Lester, J. D., & Lester, J. D. (2014). *The LB brief handbook* (5th ed.). Pearson.