SEMICOLONs & COLONs

A semicolon is strong enough to join two independent clauses. It is more pronounced than that indicated by a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

A colon indicates the introduction of a quotation or list of items, or the separation of two independent clauses where the second expands the first.

Semicolons

- DO put semicolons outside of closing quotation marks.
- DO place a semicolon before an adverbial conjunction between two independent clauses.

- DO NOT use a semicolon between a dependent clause and an independent clause.
- DO NOT use a semicolon to introduce a list of items; instead, use a colon.
- DO NOT use a semicolon next to dashes.

Colons

With an appositive, list, or question:
- DO use when listing items after an independent clause.
- DO use after the words “the following” and “as follows” at the end of independent clauses.
- DO use if an incomplete sentence introduces a direct quotation.

- DO NOT use after an incomplete sentence.
- DO NOT use after “such as,” “like,” or “including.”

Between sentences:
- When using a sentence as an introduction to another sentence, DO use a colon in between them.

- DO NOT use when a direct object consists of a series or list of items.
- DO NOT use between a dependent clause and an independent clause.

Conventional formats:
- Between a title and subtitle
- Between Bible chapters and verses
- After words in memo headings
- After formal letter openings