**Semicolons**

### Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
- Determine the purpose of semicolons.
- Identify semicolons in sentences.
- Use semicolons in sentences.

### Preparation

**Materials Needed**
- Chart paper and markers
- Semicolons (BLM 8)
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text, the practice text, and the EL sentence frames on chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.

### 1. Focus

#### Explain Semicolons

**Say:** Writers use semicolons between independent clauses when they are not joined by a comma and a conjunction such as **and** or **but**. An independent clause is a group of words that contains a complete thought and can stand on its own. We use a semicolon to join two independent clauses that are closely related. When we use a semicolon instead of a period, we show that the thoughts in the two independent clauses have a close relationship.

**Model Using Semicolons**

Display the following text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources, and read it aloud to students.

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My English, after all, is close to perfect; I doubt that anyone could detect an accent.
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**Modeling Text**

**Say:** Look at the first part of the sentence before the semicolon. "My English, after all, is close to perfect" is an independent clause. It is a sentence that can stand by itself. "I doubt that anyone could detect an accent" is also an independent clause. It, too, can stand by itself. The writer used a semicolon instead of a period, which would make the two clauses separate sentences. Unlike a period, the semicolon shows a close relationship between the thoughts in the two clauses.

**Say:** Even though it forms a complete thought, the group of words after a semicolon does not begin with a capital letter (unless the first word were a proper noun or a word such as I, which would be capitalized anyway). Writers use semicolons to show that two thoughts are closely related and to vary their sentences structures to help their writing flow smoothly.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Semicolons

Display the practice text on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources.

Ask students to identify the two independent clauses in each run-on sentence, and then to add semicolons to create sentences with two related independent clauses. (Students do not need to copy the sentences.)

| 1. I did not need new opportunities; my life was just fine! |
| 2. We arrived at our new apartment building: Apartment 1L was ours. |

Practice Text

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Sentences with Semicolons

Invite pairs to share their results with the class. Discuss their responses. Ask the following questions:

- What are the independent clauses in each sentence?
- Where did you put the semicolon?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that semicolons join two complete thoughts that are closely related. Remember to use semicolons in your writing to show how ideas are related and to vary your sentence structures.

If you would like to give students additional practice using semicolons, have them complete BLM 8.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud their answers and sentences from BLM 8. Use students’ answers to provide corrective feedback.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Beginning ELs are not ready to work on this English grammar skill. While other students collaborate on the small-group activity or write independently, meet one on one with students to support developmentally appropriate grammar skills based on their independent writing and language level. For example, you may want to work on students’ use of punctuation such as periods and commas.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers to revise the practice sentences. Provide the following sentence frames to assist students in discussing the sentences:

- The independent clause is ______.
- I put the semicolon after ______.
- I changed the word ______ to lowercase.