



THE SEMI-COLON

A semi-colon connects phrases or clauses that are closely linked in meaning. Using a semi-colon is limited to three situations.

16a

Connect independent clauses

Semi-colons can connect two independent clauses (or simple sentences) to form a compound sentence.

Simple sentence/independent clause → The Chinese zodiac uses twelve animals to represent human qualities.

Simple sentence/independent clause → The Chinese zodiac runs on a twelve-year cycle.

Compound sentence → The Chinese zodiac uses twelve animals to represent human qualities; it also runs on a twelve-year cycle.

16b

Use with adverbial conjunctions or transitional phrases to connect clauses

Two simple sentences can be connected with an adverbial conjunction (also known as a conjunctive adverb) when a semi-colon is used to the left of the adverbial conjunction and a comma to the right of it. See **15f** for a list of adverbial conjunctions.

Transitional phrases

after all	in contrast
as a matter of fact	in fact
as a result	in like manner
at any rate	in other words
at the same time	in the meantime
equally important	on one hand
even so	on the contrary
for example	on the other hand
for instance	to illustrate
in addition	while this may be true
in conclusion	

- The Chinese zodiac uses twelve animals to represent human qualities; **furthermore**, it runs on a twelve-year cycle.
- The Chinese zodiac uses twelve animals to represent human qualities; **in fact**, it runs on a twelve-year cycle.

16c

Separate groups that contain commas

If the items in a series that you are connecting already have commas, use semi-colons to separate them.

- The Chinese zodiac uses twelve animals, such as the boar and the snake, to represent human qualities; runs on a twelve-year cycle; and is widely used throughout Asia, not just in China.



Chinese zodiac

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Revise these sentences, adding semi-colons where needed. Not all sentences will need semi-colons.

1. Bob Berner first introduced the backslash to computer programming in the 1960s it is sometimes called a *slosh*.
2. The backslash is a typographical mark furthermore it is an ASCII character.
3. The backslash is also used to separate the directory and file parts of a Web site address.
4. The backslash, a typographical mark, is used in computing to indicate that whatever follows should be treated differently or specially it is used in mathematics to indicate a set difference and it is used with the forward slash in linguistics to indicate phonemes.
5. Asian programmers can use other characters that are treated exactly as the backslash consequently this can cause some confusion.