Using the Semi-Colon

VOCABULARY

Independent Clause
A group of words, including a subject and verb, which can stand alone as a complete sentence.

Conjunctive Adverb
A word that joins together two independent clauses (e.g., therefore, thus, in addition, moreover, likewise, etc.).

THE RULE
Use a semi-colon to combine two independent clauses into one sentence with or without a conjunctive adverb. In addition, use a semi-colon when separating items in a list that already contain commas.

PRACTICE Using Semi-colons with Independent Clauses

Error: I could not get coffee today, Rinnova was closed.
Correction: I could not get coffee today; Rinnova was closed.

PRACTICE Using Semi-colons with Conjunctive Adverbs

Error: Literary Analysis is the most challenging course on this campus, therefore, I highly recommend taking it.
Correction: Literary Analysis is the most challenging course on this campus; therefore, I highly recommend taking it.

PRACTICE When to use Semi-colons in a List

Error: The students in my unit are from Ontario, Canada, Anchorage, Alaska, and Nashville, Tennessee.
Correction: The students in my unit are from Ontario, Canada; Anchorage, Alaska; and Nashville, Tennessee.