



Colons

Colons can be effective in your essay, but only if used correctly. The colon has more limitations than the semicolon, and because of that, the colon will be used much more rarely than the semicolon. However, there is a place for the colon if you know where to look.

There are 7 ways that the colon can be used:

- 1) The colon can be used preceding a list, but only after a complete sentence.
 - "I bought the following things for school this year: pencils, pens, paper, printer ink, binders, a bookbag, etc."
- 2) Colons can be used to precede an effect or consequence of an action.
 - "They only had one choice: they had to win."
- 3) The colon can also be used before a quotation. However, the introductory clause must be rearranged for this to work.
 - "This is what Sarah said about books: 'I love books! I wish everyone felt the same way; books have an unbelievable effect on the human mind, and humanity is made stronger by having read them.'"
- 4) Colons are often found after a salutation on a letter.
 - "Dear Madam Secretary:"
- 5) When citing a sacred text, you will need to use a colon.
 - "I cited Genesis 1:14 in my philosophy essay."
- 6) One very obvious place for the colon is in time.
 - "The game starts at 7:30."
- 7) Regarding numbers, the colon also has a place in ratios.
 - "The student/faculty ratio is 15:1."

For any other questions about how to use colons, come to the Writing Center; we're happy to help!