Semicolons and Colons

Semicolon ;
- Uses
  o To sort out a monster list
    ▪ My classmates are from Milwaukee, Wisconsin; St. Paul, Minnesota; Des Moines, Iowa; and Detroit, Michigan.
  o To separate closely related independent clauses
    ▪ I don’t have time to practice; my school work is too overwhelming.
  o To imply a relationship between nicely balanced ideas without actually stating that relationship
    ▪ In application to the previously used sentence: Instead of saying because my school work is overwhelming, the because is implied. By doing this, the reader becomes involved in the development of the sentence.
  o To separate two independent clauses
    ▪ When I was going to school in St. Paul, Minnesota, I lived in an off-campus apartment complex; but I will never forget the dormitories I lived in when I attended a school out of state.

Colon :
- Uses
  o Prior to a list
    ▪ Our baseball team will play the following teams: University of Northern Iowa, University of Minnesota Crookston, University of Minnesota Duluth, and Wayne State.
  o Before an explanation that has a clause before it that can stand by itself
There was only one priority left for me to see to: finishing my homework.

- To separate an independent clause from a quotation
  - My baseball coach loves to use the same phrase before every practice and game: “shut up and play baseball.”
Semicolons
1. Use a semicolon, not a comma, to join two independent clauses separated by a conjunctive adverb (such as however). The conjunctive adverbs include accordingly, consequently, hence, however, moreover, otherwise, therefore, and thus.
   **Incorrect:** I requested an extension of time to file my brief with the Seventh Circuit, however, the judge denied my motion, citing local rules.

   **Correct:** I requested an extension of time to file my brief with the Seventh Circuit; however, the judge denied my motion, citing local rules.

   **Incorrect:** The defendant failed to check her rear-view mirror before changing lanes, therefore she breached a duty owed to the plaintiff.

   **Correct:** The defendant failed to check her rear-view mirror before changing lanes; therefore, she breached a duty owed to the plaintiff.

2. Use a comma, not a semicolon, to join two independent clauses separated by a conjunction (such as "and" and "but").
   **Incorrect:** The appellate court disagreed with the decision of the trial court; but the court refused to remand the case for a new trial, relying on the harmless-error rule.

   **Also Incorrect:**
   The appellate court disagreed with the decision of the trial court but the court refused to remand the case for a new trial, relying on the harmless-error rule.

   **Correct:** The appellate court disagreed with the decision of the trial court, but the court refused to remand the case for a new trial, relying on the harmless-error rule.

3. Use commas to separate items in a list unless the list is so complicated that semicolons are required for clarity.
   **Incorrect:** The first-year curriculum included courses in Torts; Contracts; Criminal Law; Legal Writing; and Justice.

   **Correct:** The first-year curriculum included courses in Torts, Contracts, Criminal Law, Legal Writing, and Justice.

   **Also Correct:**
   The first-year curriculum included courses in Torts, which covers personal-injury litigation; Contracts, which covers the creation and enforcement of private agreements; Criminal Law, which provides an introduction to the theory of criminal law and specified crimes; Legal Writing, which provides training in the basic skills needed to succeed in the practice of law; and Justice, which presents an introduction to the schools of legal thought and the theoretical foundations of our legal system.