**Stylin’ Syntax**

**Punctuation:**

**Semicolon ( ; )—**used to **connect two** **complete sentences** that express:

-parallel ideas

-similar ideas

-continuous thought

-juxtaposition (comparison/contrast)

**N.B.** has the same function as a **period**; connects two separate, but equally important, ideas.

**Colon ( : )—**directs the reader’s attention to:

-a list

-a definition or explanation

-a result

-additional information/detail

-answer a question

-emphasize a point

**N.B.** there is a **closer** connection between the parts of a sentence connected by a **colon**, however, the two parts of the sentence are generally **unequal** in length or importance.

**Em dash ( — )—**used to mark a parenthetical thought or emphasize:

- an interruption of thought

-an interjection or extension of one thought into another

-pauses

-a change in tone

-certain parts of sentence/conclusions

-two joint ideas

-a brief summary/explanation

**N.B.** do not mistake the em dash (—) for the slightly narrower en dash (–) or even narrower hyphen (-).

**How to make an em dash:** type a word, hit the dash key twice, type another word, then hit the space bar.



**Unbalanced Punctuation:**

Colon

Em dash

**Balanced Punctuation:**

Semi-colon

**Sentence Types:**

1. Declarative—makes a statement; creates assertive tone: *You didn’t do your homework.*
2. Interrogative—asks a question; creates questioning tone: *Did you do your homework?*
3. Imperative—gives a command; creates authoritative tone: *Do your homework now.*
4. Exclamatory—makes an exclamation; creates emotional tone: *Please do your homework!*

**Sentence Lengths:**

Telegraphic: 5 words or fewer

Short: approximately 5 words

Medium: approximately 18 words

Long: long and involved—30 words or more

**Sentence Structure:**

1. Loose/Cumulative Sentences—the main idea (primary subject and verb) comes **first**,and builds parallel phrases/clauses after.

-Most English sentences are loose sentences.

-Add parallel elements at the end; particularly effective for description

-e.g. *The students sat quietly, trembling at the thought of writing an essay*. OR *The teacher continued to laugh—uncontrollably, maddeningly, horribly.*

1. Periodic Sentences—builds three or more parallel phrases/clauses to a main idea, which comes **last**.

-Rarely appears in modern writing

-Can be persuasive: allow readers who disagree with your conclusion to read your evidence with an open mind

-e.g. *That morning, after a turbulent trip and some exciting experiences, especially in contrast with the typical mundane Monday, we arrived at school.*

1. Balanced Sentences—two parallel elements set off against each other, like **equal** weights on a scale.

-When read aloud, one tends to pause between each balanced part, each seeming equal; pair well with semicolons

-Each part of the sentence is clearly parallel in grammar and form (alike in structure, meaning, and/or length)

-Particularly effective if you have an idea that has a contrast or antithesis; can be used to develop an entire paragraph

-e.g. *When the going gets tough, the tough get going.* OR *The students’ desire is for freedom; the teacher’s desire is for control.*

**Schemes:** Arrangement of ideas, words, or phrases for stylistic effect (i.e. SYNTAX) to reinforce meaning

**Schemes of Balance**

Parallelism—similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases or clauses. Emphasizes similarities and connections: *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness…*

Antithesis—the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure. Emphasizes dissimilarities and contraries; produces the quality of an aphorism: *Though studious, he was popular; though argumentative, he was modest; though inflexible, he was candid…*

**Schemes of Omission**

Asyndeton—deliberate omission of conjunctions between a series of related clauses. Produces a hurried rhythm in the sentence: *I came, I saw, I conquered*.

**Schemes of Repetition**

Polysyndeton—the deliberate use of many conjunctions, e.g “and” (opposite of asyndeton). Suggests flow or continuity in some instances, special emphasis in others: *This year I am taking English and history and biology and gym.*

Alliteration—repetition of initial or medial consonants in two or more adjacent words. Sometimes used for humorous effect: *Tart, tingling, and even ticklish* (Sprite ad).

Anaphora—the repetition of same word or group of words at the beginnings of successive clauses. Always used deliberately, this scheme helps to establish a marked rhythm and often produces strong emotional effect: *We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds. We shall fight in the fields and in the streets…*

Epistrophe—repetition of the same word or group of words at the end of successive clauses (opposite of anaphora): *I’ll have my bond! Speak not against my bond! I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond!*