

## Colons

### Introducing Further Information

A colon is a pivot in the sentence: it indicates both the end of a thought and the beginning of further information about that thought. If the part before the colon is not structurally complete without the part following the colon, don't use a colon.

- *I am going to study arts: English, history, and philosophy.* Correct.
- *I am going to study: English, history, and philosophy.* Incorrect.
- *I am going to study English, history, and philosophy.* Correct.

### Quotations

*In academic writing, a colon is used to introduce a quotation: "The term 'colon' was originally used to mean a complete thought, and only later to mean a piece of punctuation to mark the end of one."*

Use the colon to introduce a quotation only when the introduction is a complete thought.

- *Virginia Woolf said women should have: "a room of [their] own."* Incorrect.
- *Virginia Woolf said women should have one thing above all: "a room of [their] own."* Correct.

### Other Uses

Colons are also used in the following specific ways:

1. To separate a title from a subtitle
2. To separate the units in times
3. To indicate the end of the salutation in a formal/business letter
4. To separate chapter and verse in a Biblical reference
5. To comply with correct citation format in some (but not all) documentation systems. Consult a handbook or documentation guide for complete information.

Examples:

*Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*

12:34 pm

To whom it may concern:

Genesis 1: 1-4

Eliot, George. *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*. London: 1874. Print. (MLA)

Smol, Anna and Jeffrey MacLeod. "A Single Leaf: Tolkien's Visual Art and Fantasy." *Mythlore*

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