

Exercise walk-through

Conventions of grammar and mechanics ■ 7.8

eXercise

You must be able to

- use punctuation to control emphasis, not only to be correct
- use the semicolon and the colon for their distinct jobs
- keep tense and person consistent across a passage
- explain why conventional errors cost credibility

Method — Punctuation as emphasis

A dash isolates and emphasises; parentheses subordinate. “The cost — and it is considerable — falls on residents” and “The cost (considerable) falls on residents” say the same and weight it differently.

Method — Semicolon and colon

A **semicolon** joins two closely related independent clauses. A **colon** introduces what follows as the fulfilment of what precedes: a list, an explanation, an example.

Method — Consistency

Shifting tense or person mid-passage forces the reader to relocate themselves.
Consistency is invisible when present and distracting when absent.

Method — Why errors cost

An error signals that the text has not been checked, and a reader who doubts your care will doubt your facts. The cost is to credibility, not to grammar.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State the difference between a dash and parentheses in effect.

Solution 2.1

Method: Punctuation as emphasis

Worked steps

a dash isolates and emphasises **B1**; parentheses subordinate the material **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

State the distinct jobs of the semicolon and the colon.

Solution 2.2

Method: Semicolon and colon

Worked steps

a semicolon joins two closely related independent clauses **B1**; a colon introduces what fulfils the preceding statement **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A passage shifts from “one must” to “you should”.

- (a) Name the fault.
- (b) State its effect on the reader.

Solution 2.3

Method: Consistency

Worked steps

(a) an inconsistent shift of person **B1**. (b) the reader must relocate themselves, which distracts from the argument **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

A colon most precisely introduces

- A** an unrelated clause
- B** what fulfils the preceding statement
- C** a contrast
- D** a concession

Solution 3.1

Method: Semicolon and colon

- A an unrelated clause
- B what fulfils the preceding statement 
- C a contrast
- D a concession

Worked steps

- B. the colon points forward to the fulfilment.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Conventional errors cost the writer mainly in

A length

B credibility

C tone

D unity

Solution 3.2

Method: Why errors cost

A length

B credibility



C tone

D unity

Worked steps

B. an unchecked text invites doubt about its facts.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 4 marks

Punctuate for emphasis on the exception: “Every department met the deadline except one the largest.”

Solution 3.3

Worked steps

correct punctuation supplied **B2**; the exception is emphasised, e.g. with a dash or colon before “the largest” **B2**.