

28 Sentence boundaries, colons and nonessential information

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 13 marks

KEY WORDS independent clause • sentence boundary
 • comma splice • modifier • colon

Objective

- Distinguish independent and dependent clauses before choosing punctuation
- Join complete clauses without a comma splice
- Place colons and paired punctuation according to sentence structure

Original public practice; marks below are classroom self-check points, not official criteria.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

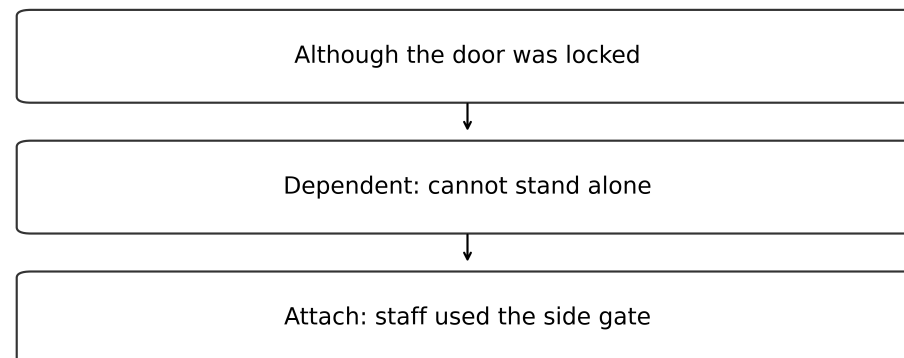
An independent clause has a subject and finite predicate and can stand as a sentence. A dependent clause introduced by although, because or when cannot stand alone in that role. Identify the clause structure before choosing punctuation; a long clause is not necessarily complete and a short one may be.

Two independent clauses can be separated by a period or semicolon, or joined with a comma and coordinating conjunction such as and or but. A comma alone creates a splice. A conjunctive adverb such as however does not replace the coordinating conjunction: use “The test was brief; however, it was demanding.”

A colon can introduce an explanation, example or list after a complete independent clause. Do not place it between a verb and its direct object or after a preposition introducing its object. “The box contains three tools: a ruler, a compass and a square” has a complete introductory clause; “The tools include: a ruler...” improperly interrupts the include construction.

Nonessential material can be enclosed by matching commas, dashes or parentheses, while essential identifying material should not be separated in that way. Removing a nonessential insertion leaves the core sentence intact. Watch both boundaries of an insertion and avoid placing a comma between the subject and main verb merely because the subject is long.

A sentence boundary depends on clause structure. “Although the door was locked” is dependent; attach it to a complete clause. “Although the door was locked, staff could enter through the side gate.” A colon follows a complete introductory clause: “Staff used one entrance: the side gate.”



Worked steps: Although the door was locked → Dependent: cannot stand alone → Attach: staff used the side gate

Worked example. Original: “The catalogue was incomplete; however, the surviving entries were useful.” Both clauses are complete; the semicolon separates them and however is followed by a comma. “The team chose one method: a supervised trial” uses a colon after a complete clause. “The catalogue, revised last year, includes new photographs” encloses a removable modifier with two commas.

■ Practice material

Editing passage. Although the old station was closed [1] its clock still worked. The mechanism was simple [2] however, repairing the hands required a specialist. One part needed replacement [3] the narrow axle behind the dial. The clock [4] which stood above the entrance [5] had become a meeting point. For this exercise there is one clock, and the which-clause adds nonessential information.

2 Practice

2.1 Choose a correct boundary: “The trial ended____ the team reviewed the data.” [1]

- A ;
- B ,
- C : and
- D however

2.2 Which colon use is correct? [1]

- **A** The site was: the old station.
- **B** The team selected one site: the old station.
- **C** The team selected: the old station.
- **D** The team worked at: the old station.

2.3 A punctuation mark that can join two complete clauses without a conjunction is a _____. [1]

2.4 Every comma in a sentence marks a complete clause boundary. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

Use the complete original case context in section 1.

3.1 Supply punctuation at [1]–[5]. Give at least two valid boundaries at [2] and explain the clause test. [3]

3.2 Explain why “One part needed: a replacement” differs from the valid colon sentence in the passage. [3]

3.3 Repair “The clock, above the entrance, and the bell was restored” while preserving the two restored objects. Explain agreement and any optional punctuation. [3]