

Grades 9–10 Playlist: Using a Colon to Introduce a List or Quotation

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2.B*:

- Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation.

Welcome

Two of the most common uses of the colon (:) are to introduce a list and to introduce a quotation. Knowing how to use a colon to introduce a list or quotation is a very important skill for a writer to have.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- use a colon to introduce a list.
- use a colon to introduce a quotation.

Review

Key Term

- A **colon** (:) is a punctuation mark with several uses, including introducing a list or a quotation.

Exploring the Standard

Colons are used for several different purposes in writing. Two of the most common are introducing lists and introducing quotations. They are not always necessary for either of these purposes, but they can be quite useful because they act as a simple visual signal to the reader that what follows may be a list or a quotation. Knowing how to use a colon for these purposes is very important.

A Closer Look: Using a Colon to Introduce a List

To use a colon to introduce a list, start with an independent clause that identifies the category of the items in the list. Then place the colon and follow it with the list of items. Here is an example:

There are many ways to relieve stress and tension: breathe slowly, talk to friends, listen to music, exercise.

The independent clause before the colon identifies the category of the list, which is *ways to relieve stress and tension*. The colon follows that. After the colon are the items in the list, separated by commas.

Watch!

This video explains how to use a colon to introduce a list:

- <https://www.opened.com/video/basic-punctuation-how-when-to-use-colons-youtube/108285>



Caution!

When using a colon to introduce a list, it is important to remember that the list should also be introduced with an independent clause. If the list does not immediately follow an independent clause, no colon is used, as in this example:

A few different types of landform are the isthmus, the peninsula, and the island.

In this sentence, the introduction “A few different types of landform are” is not an independent clause, so it is not separated from the list by a colon.

A Closer Look: Using a Colon to Introduce a Quotation

Using a colon to introduce a quotation is similar to using a colon to introduce a list. The quotation is introduced with an independent clause, followed by a colon. After the colon comes the quotation. Here is an example:

I believe Shakespeare said it best: “Brevity is the soul of wit.”

This sentence begins with the independent clause “I believe Shakespeare said it best.” This is followed by a colon. After that comes the quote, surrounded by quotation marks.

Caution!

As with lists, the colon is used after an independent clause to introduce a quote. One would usually not use a colon if the introduction is not an independent clause; though, unlike with lists, this is merely uncommon and not necessarily wrong. Usually, a comma would be used, as in this example:

As my father used to say, “Always bring an umbrella.”

Watch!

This video reviews how to use a colon to introduce a quotation or a list:

- <https://www.opened.com/video/when-to-use-a-colon-youtube/108286>

Applying the Standard

Complete these worksheets to practice using colons to introduce lists and quotations:

- http://www.k12reader.com/punctuation/Using_a_Colon_to_Introduce_a_List.pdf
- http://www.k12reader.com/punctuation/colons_introducing_a_quotation.pdf
- <http://englishlinx.com//pdf-content-by-subject/Colons-Introduce-Quotation-Worksheet.pdf>



Teaching Notes: Playlist: Using a Colon to Introduce a List or Quotation

The goal of L.9-10.2.B is for students to be able to use a colon to introduce a list or quotation. These teaching notes contain ideas and resources for instruction around this standard.

Activity

Use the following activity to enhance students' understanding of using colons to introduce quotations.

1. Choose a very short excerpt from a grade-appropriate story that contains dialogue. Go through a few examples of dialogue in the story, and show students how each sentence could be rewritten to use a colon.
2. Next, pick four more excerpts that also contain examples of dialogue. Split students into four groups, and assign each excerpt to a different group. Have each group rewrite each sentence in their excerpt to use a colon. Then, have each group present their rewritten dialogue to the class.
3. Afterward, have students write their own examples of quotations introduced by colons.

Using a Colon to Introduce a Related Idea

Although it is not mentioned in the standard, a colon can also be used to introduce a related idea such as an explanation, as some of the additional resources mention. As with introducing lists and quotations, what precedes the colon should be an independent clause. Here is an example:

There is only one road out of town: Main Street.

In this example, "There is only one road out of town" is an independent clause that introduces an idea. The colon lets the reader know that what follows will relate to that idea. The words that follow the colon, "Main Street," identify the only road out of town.

Additional Resources

Here are a few additional resources to help teach using colons to introduce lists or quotations:

- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/44/>
- <http://www.aims.edu/student/online-writing-lab/grammar/colon-use>
- http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_04.htm

