**PURPOSE**

A colon [:] introduces and draws attention to information that will expand or clarify the preceding independent clause (a clause that can stand on its own as a sentence). This information could be another clause, a list, an appositive, or a quotation. Remember, a colon must be preceded by an independent clause.

**STYLE**

Typically, writers place only one space after a colon and do not capitalize the first word of a complete sentence following the colon. These are stylistic choices, however; just be consistent throughout your entire document.

**RULES AND EXAMPLES**

**USE A COLON TO INTRODUCE A LIST.**

*The adventurers faced several misfortunes on their quest: swarms of killer bees, poison ivy, and wild animals.*

**USE A COLON BEFORE AN APPOSITIVE.**

*Guinevere loved two men: Lancelot and Arthur.*

**USE A COLON BEFORE A QUOTATION.**

*The battered knight raised his sword and bellowed the unforgettable order: “Begone, foul beast!”*

**USE A COLON BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES IF THE SECOND SUMMARIZES OR EXPLAINS THE FIRST.**

*The tantalizing treasure glinted in the moonlight: you could loot it, but you’d be cursed for eternity.*

**IF A COLON COMES AFTER A QUOTATION, THE COLON BELONGS AFTER THE CLOSING QUOTATION MARKS.**

*In “Morte d’Arthur,” we see only two knights have made it to the “barren land”: Sir Bedivere and King Arthur.*

**COMMON COLON MISTAKES**

In the three incorrect examples below, note that the colon is not preceded by an independent clause; simply removing the colons will make the sentences correct.

**DON’T USE A COLON AFTER A PREPOSITION.**

*The adventurers’ quest was plagued by: swarms of killer bees, poison ivy, and wild animals.*

**DON’T USE A COLON BETWEEN A VERB AND ITS OBJECT OR COMPLEMENT.**

*Five Knights of the Round Table are: Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, Percival, and Tristan.*

**DON’T USE A COLON AFTER WORDS LIKE INCLUDING, FOR EXAMPLE, OR SUCH AS.**

*My paper is on Arthurian characters with mystical powers such as: Sir Kay, Merlin, and Morgan Le Fay.*

**OTHER COLONS USES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter salutation</th>
<th>Dear Sir or Madam:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours and minutes</td>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportions</td>
<td>The elves outnumbered the dwarves 5:1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and Subtitle</td>
<td><em>Experience Points and Gold: A Beginner’s Guide to Questing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographic information</td>
<td>New York: Norton, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter and verse</td>
<td>Exodus 20:2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>