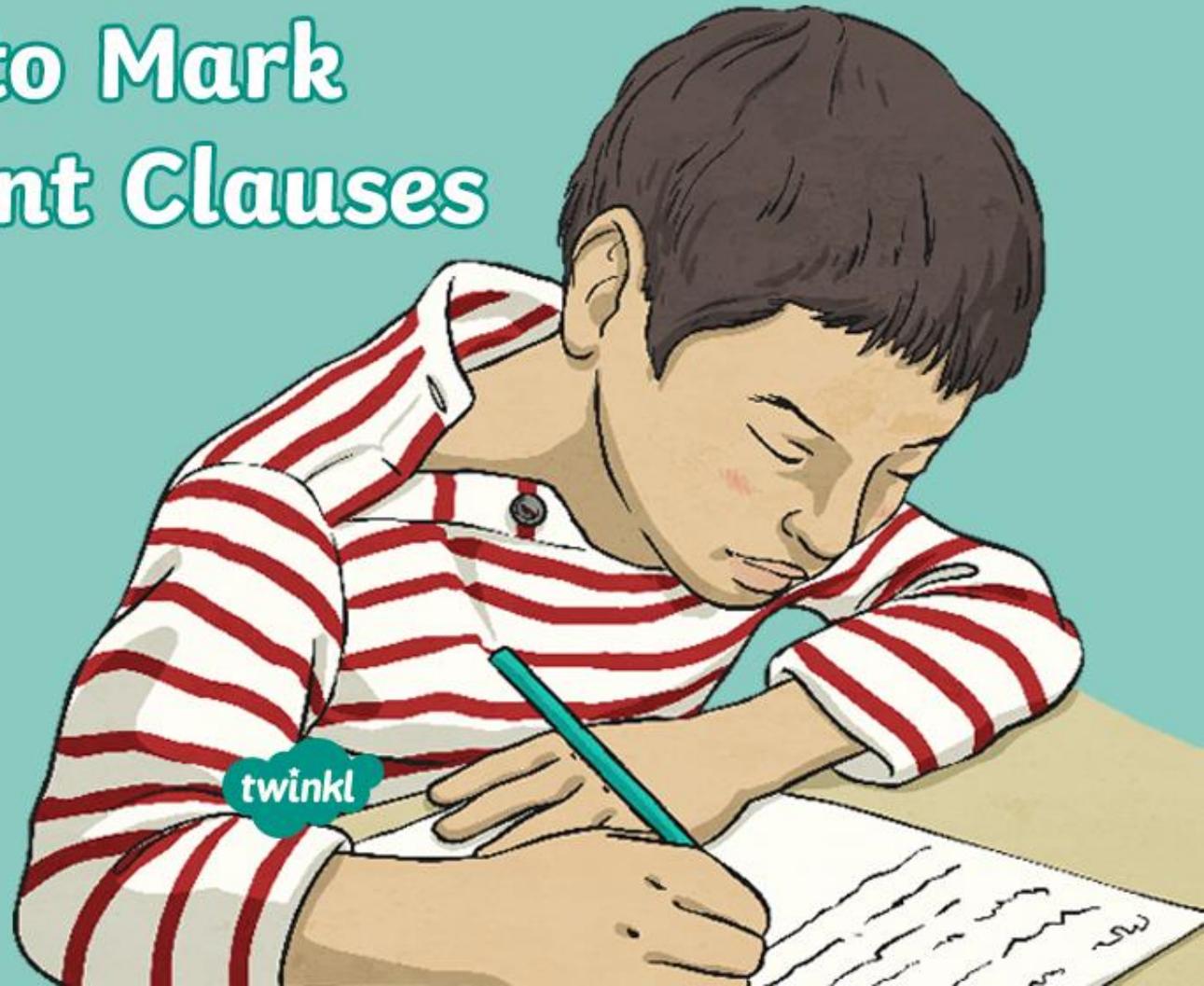


# Using Colons, Semi-Colons & Dashes to Mark Independent Clauses

## Warm-up



# Colon, Semi-Colon or Dash?

What do you know about these three punctuation marks? Tell your partner.

:

A colon can be used to:

- introduce a list
- separate two independent clauses when the second clause explains or illustrates the first clause

;

A semi-colon can be used to:

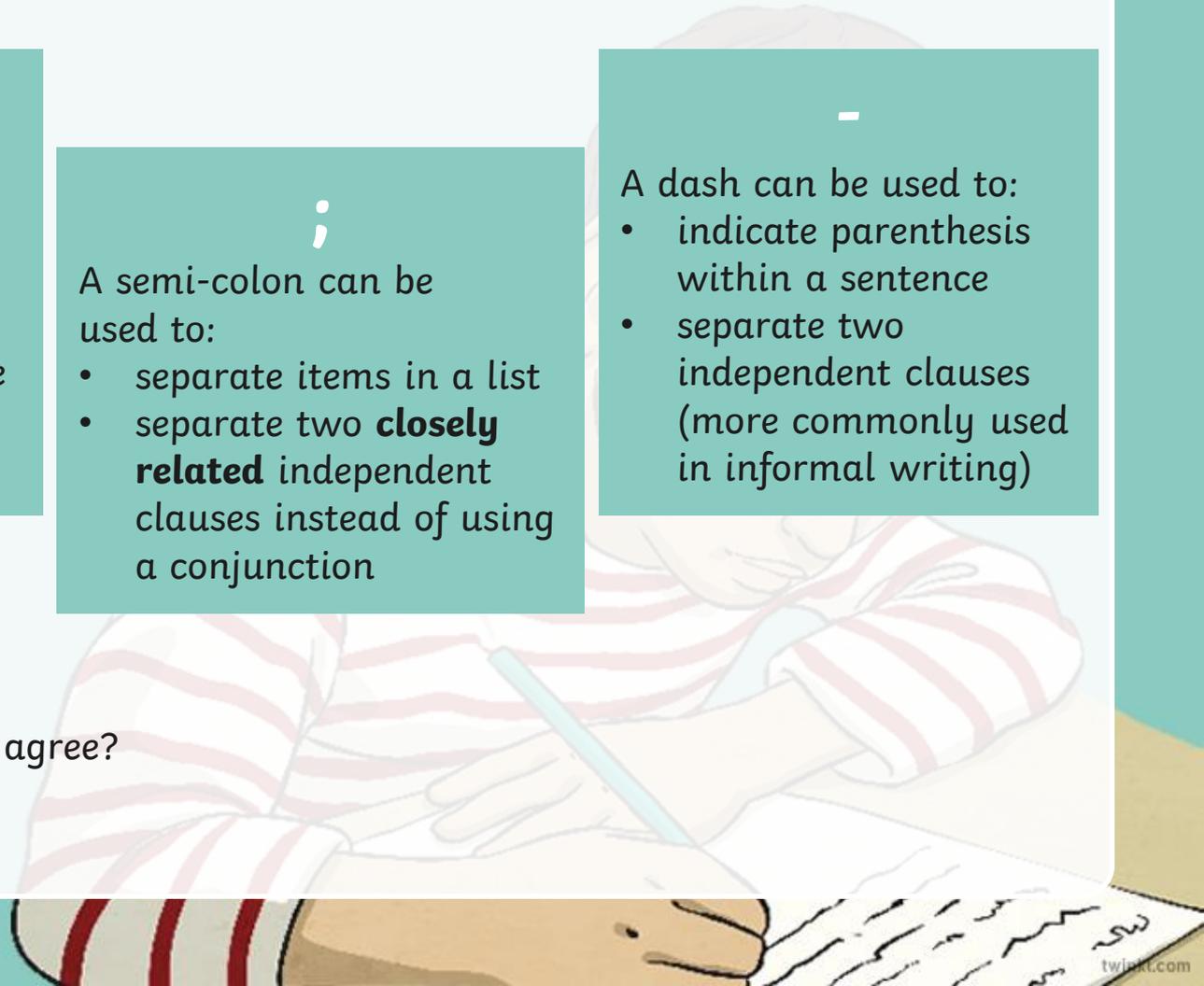
- separate items in a list
- separate two **closely related** independent clauses instead of using a conjunction

-

A dash can be used to:

- indicate parenthesis within a sentence
- separate two independent clauses (more commonly used in informal writing)

Do you and your partner agree?



# What Is an Independent Clause?

We are focusing on colons, semi-colons and dashes used to separate or link two independent clauses. So what is an independent clause?

An independent clause is a clause that can stand on its own.

The **safari was** amazing.



An independent (or main) clause always has a **subject** + a **verb** = complete thought.

# Independent or Not?

Sort the following clauses depending on whether they are independent or dependent (cannot stand on their own – can be called ‘subordinate clauses’):

my dog loves bananas

we visited London

when we visited London

if we go to the Moon

because my dog  
loves bananas

we will go to the Moon

<b>Independent</b> Clause	my dog loves bananas we visited London we will go to the Moon
<b>Dependent</b> (Subordinate) Clause	when we visited London if we go to the Moon because my dog loves bananas

# Do They Link?

We are focusing on joining two independent clauses so they **must** make sense alone but they also must be linked in some way if we are going to use a semi-colon, colon or dash in place of a full stop. In the following examples, decide whether it is possible to link the independent clauses or if a full stop is needed:

James enjoys playing tennis

::;-

he doesn't like football.

He was late for school

::;-

his alarm clock hadn't gone off.

After school, I played outside

.

tomorrow is my birthday.

Lilies are my favourite flowers

::;-

they smell awful though.

Now we will think about which punctuation mark would be the best to link these independent clauses. Look back at the definitions at the beginning to remind you.



# Semi-Colons

Where should the semi-colons be in the following sentences to separate the two independent clauses?

James enjoys playing tennis ; he doesn't like football.

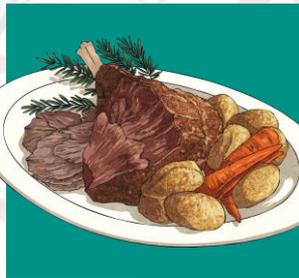
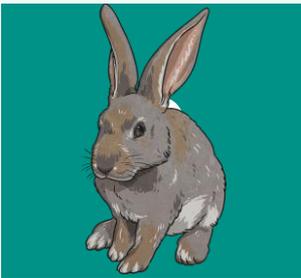
I enjoyed my swim this morning ; I felt exhausted afterwards.

The witch lives in a small cottage in the woods ; the dragon lives in a cave.



# Your Turn – Semi-Colons

Choose a mystery box. Write two independent clauses to describe the picture and separate them with a semi-colon:



# Colons

Where should the colons be in the following sentences to separate the two independent clauses?

He was late for school : his alarm clock hadn't gone off.

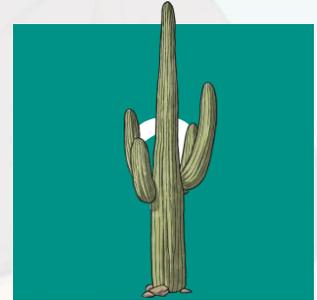
I have very little time to learn French : the school trip is in a few weeks.

You need to clean the fish tank out : the water is getting murky.



# Your Turn – Colons

Choose a mystery box. Write two independent clauses to describe the picture and separate them with a colon:



# Dashes

Where should the dashes be in the following sentences?

Lilies are my favourite flowers – they smell awful though.

My younger brother can be good fun – he can also be a complete pain at times.

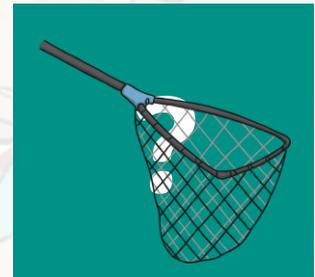
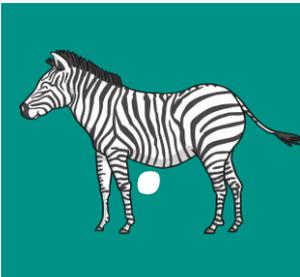
I enjoy playing on my trampoline – I can jump higher than my sister.

Do you notice how these sentences are slightly more informal?



# Your Turn – Dashes

Choose a mystery box. Write two independent clauses to describe the picture and separate them with a dash:



# Am I Right?

Read the following sentences and decide whether I've used the correct punctuation:

We often go to the library on Tuesdays, we choose lots of new books.

Wendy was excited about the trip to the aquarium, she mostly wanted to see the sharks.

My sister really likes ice-cream, her favourite flavour is strawberry.



You cannot use a comma to separate two independent clauses – we call this a **comma splice**. To correct these sentences you would need to change the commas to be either **colons**, **semi-colons** or **dashes**. Which would you choose? Why?

# Super Sentences

Can you write descriptions of these photos? Write two independent clauses and link them with either a colon, semi-colon or dash:



I enjoy cooking with my grandad; I particularly like baking cakes.



Walking along the beach was great fun – me getting splashed by the waves was hilarious.

# Quick Quiz 1

Put colons, semi-colons or dashes into these sentences:

The school fair was a huge success : over £800 was raised for the new library.

Trekking through the jungle was exhausting ; the hikers were worn out.

Ava really disliked banana milkshake – she said it tasted like smelly socks.

I spent the afternoon playing tennis ; my arm was aching this evening.



# Quick Quiz 2

Do these sentences have the correct punctuation? Please mark my work for me and correct anything that is incorrect:

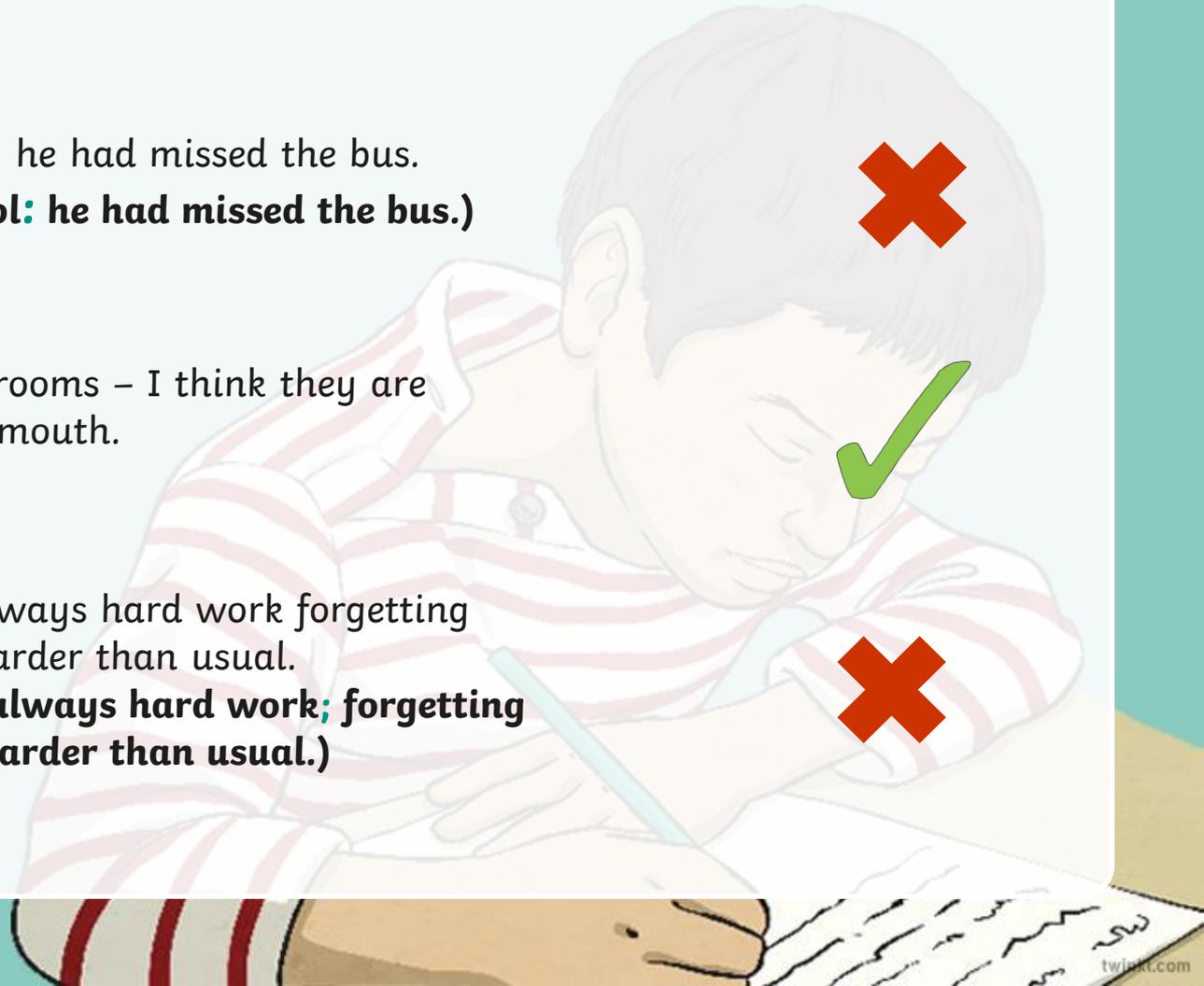
Fred was late for school, he had missed the bus.  
**(Fred was late for school: he had missed the bus.)**



I have never liked mushrooms – I think they are like slimy slugs in your mouth.



Putting up the tent is always hard work forgetting the pegs made it even harder than usual.  
**(Putting up the tent is always hard work; forgetting the pegs made it even harder than usual.)**



# Quick Quiz 3

Match the independent clauses and decide which punctuation to use to link them:

Walking is great exercise

:

he is the messiest person in the world!

We enjoy spending time in the museum

;

they came first in the national competition.

The choir were overjoyed

:

it is an inexpensive way to keep fit.

I don't like sharing a room with my brother

-

the dinosaurs are my favourite part.

twinkl

