

## *Using the Semi-Colon*

Here are some tips on the use of the semi-colon.

1. What is a semi-colon?

A semi-colon is a mark of punctuation that looks like a period sitting on top of a comma. It looks like this----; The semi-colon stands on the line; it does not go through the line.

2. How is a semi-colon used?

There are two main ways to use a semi-colon.

- a. Use a semi-colon between the two parts of a compound sentence. NOTE: Do not use a conjunction before or after the semi-colon.

Yesterday we went on a long hike; today we plan to go rafting.

My little brother plays the drums; my mother doesn't like it!

Notice that this use of the semi-colon “saves” the sentence from being a run-on sentence. Without the semi-colon where it is, the sentence would be a run-on, which would be a serious error.

- b. Use a semi-colon instead of a comma to separate items in a series if those items already contain several commas among them. In this way, you avoid confusion from so many commas all in a row.

The cities with the most unemployment included such well known places as Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles, California; Washington, D.C.; Kansas City, Kansas; and Brownsville, Texas.

The five dates of the international conference are May 5, 1988; May 12, 1988; May 19, 1988; June 14, 1988; and August 12, 1988.