

## Using Colons, Dashes, and Parentheses

Punctuation marks are usually thought of as ways to separate ideas. However, some punctuation marks can be used to join facts, ideas, and other types of information. You can even use these punctuation marks to combine sentences. Colons, dashes, and parentheses are three of these types of marks. When one sentence merely names a series of items, consider using a colon to connect the series to another sentence.

<b>Original:</b>	I used several types of materials for my handmade brochure. They were paper, colored pens, glue, and pictures.
<b>Combined:</b>	I used the following materials for my handmade brochure: paper, colored pens, glue, and pictures.

Using a colon to combine sentences can help you make a dramatic statement.

<b>Original:</b>	I was certain of only one thing. I wanted it to look professional.
<b>Combined:</b>	I was certain of only one thing: I wanted it to look professional.

Dashes and parentheses can add variety to your writing. They can help vary your tone, changing your voice or that of a character. A dash can allow you to insert a whole idea, even a whole sentence, right into the middle of another sentence.

<b>Original:</b>	My photograph showed a sandy beach and palm trees. It was the most perfect beach in the world!
<b>Combined:</b>	My photograph showed a sandy beach—the most perfect beach in the world!—and palm trees.

A dash can also mean namely, that is, or in other words.

<b>Original:</b>	Visitors come to the island mainly for three reasons. They want to relax, fish, and swim.
<b>Combined:</b>	Visitors come to the island mainly for three reasons—relaxing, fishing, and swimming.

With parentheses, you can include interesting information that might not be of major importance.

<b>Original:</b>	Actually, my mother gave me some ideas. She's a travel agent
<b>Combined:</b>	Actually, my mother (she's a travel agent) gave me some ideas.

### **DIRECTIONS Combine each of the sets of sentences on the next page into a single sentence.**

For the first four sentences, combine the sentences by using the mark of punctuation that appears in italics at the end of the item.

For the last four sentences, choose whatever mark of punctuation you think is appropriate—a colon, a dash(es) or parentheses.

1. My travel brochure was due on November 11. It had to be complete, not a rough draft. (paired dashes)
2. My brochure was intended to entice travelers to an imaginary tropical island. The brochure was a lovely three-page spread. (parens)
3. Flights depart for this island three days a week. The days are Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. (colon)
4. Travelers would want to visit this island for several reasons. There are pristine beaches, friendly people, tropical plants, and delicious food. (dash)
5. The island features another spectacular attraction. It has an active volcano.
6. If you take the weekend special, you can save quite a bit of money. By the way, it is not advertised.
7. When I prepared my brochure, I made sure to use descriptive terms and tantalizing photos. It was the best in the class.
8. I chose to highlight three main ideas. These were the daytime activities, the quality of the accommodations, and the island's beauty.

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## Answer Key

### Answer Keys:

Answers will vary. These are sample answers.

1. My travel brochure—it had to be complete, not a rough draft—was due on November 11.
2. My brochure (a lovely three-page spread) was intended to entice travelers to an imaginary tropical island.
3. Flights depart for this island three days a week: Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.
4. Travelers would want to visit this island for several reasons—pristine beaches, friendly people, tropical plants, and delicious food.
5. The island features another spectacular attraction: it has an active volcano.
6. If you take the weekend special (by the way, it is not advertised), you can save quite a bit of money.
7. When I prepared my brochure—it was the best in the class—I made sure to use descriptive terms and tantalizing photos.
8. I chose to highlight three main ideas: the daytime activities, the quality of the accommodations, and the island's beauty.