

**Semicolons** and **colons** are special punctuation marks, which means that they should only be used when necessary.

#### Most Common Mistake

*When researchers looked at the consumption of artificial sweeteners; they found it varied immensely (Johnson et al., 2013).*

**Semicolons should *not* be used to join an independent clause to a phrase or clause.**

### Semicolons

**#1 Use a semicolon to connect two complete and related sentences.**

**Example** *To understand how artificial sweeteners function in humans, Johnson et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal study over the course of five years; in the study, researchers found that artificial sweeteners affected several metabolic processes.*

**#2 Use a semicolon to separate items in an extended list:**

**Example** *Smith (2014) found that artificial sweeteners had the following effects: increased blood sugar by 12.4% for two hours following consumption; raised A1C by 3% over a six-month period; and created negative gut flora within just one hour of consumption.*

**Example** *Participants were asked to self report their daily calorie consumption; their consumption of artificial sweeteners, which included added sweeteners; and their daily exercise, which was found not to be a contributing factor (Johnson et al., 2013).*

### Colons

**#1 Use a colon to set off an extended list or block quotation:**

**Example** *Smith (2014) found that artificial sweeteners had the following effects: increased blood sugar by 12.4% for two hours following consumption; raised A1C by 3% over a six-month period; and created negative gut flora within just one hour of consumption.*

**#2 Use a colon to connect an independent clause to information that expands on it.**

**Example** *Smith (2014) noted one major flaw in the study: participants self-reported their consumption of artificial sweeteners.*