Washtenaw Community College | THE WRITING CENTER

Writing Guide: **Colon**

1. Use a colon <u>after an independent clause that introduces a list</u>. An independent clause is a word group that can stand alone as a sentence.

   The students reviewed the major punctuation marks: the period, the comma, the colon, the semicolon, and the apostrophe.

2. Use a colon <u>after an independent clause that introduces a quotation</u>.

   The words of the old philosopher echoed in her mind: "You cannot step into the same river twice."

3. Use a colon <u>between two independent clauses if the second clause summarizes or explains the first</u>.

   The reason for her success was clear: she worked hard and remained patient.

4. Observe these <u>conventional uses</u> of the colon
   - After the salutation in a business letter

     ○ **Dear Ms. Jovanovich:**

   - Between hours and minutes in the numeral form of times of the day

     ○ **Class starts at 1:30**.

   - Between the numerals of a ratio

     ○ **The student-to-teacher ratio was 28:1.**