**WHAT IS A COLON?**
A colon (:) is a punctuation mark that is used to introduce information that comes after an independent clause such as examples, another closely-related independent clause, explanatory material, quotations, or series.

## Colon Usage

### 1. Explanatory Material

A colon is used to introduce explanatory material which explains, exemplifies, or summarizes such as examples and *appositives*.

*I know the best way to quench one’s thirst: water.*

### 2. Independent Clauses

A colon is used to separate two independent clauses when the second independent clause renames or provides more information for the first one.

*Studies show that global warming continues to have harmful effects on our environment: more ice caps are melting as temperatures continue to increase.*

### 3. Quotations

A colon can also be used to introduce a quotation (usually a long prose passage) if it is preceded by a complete sentence (*independent clause*).

*In the 2007 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush recognizes the health care needs of so many Americans: “A future of hope and opportunity requires that all our citizens have affordable and available health care.”*
4. Lists

Colons can be used to introduce a series or list when preceded by a complete sentence (independent clause). A series or list occurs when two or more items are listed in a sentence.

I am taking several classes next semester: Literature I, Western Civilization 2, Art Appreciation, Introduction to Psychology, and Microeconomics.

There were several things that Jamie had to pick up at the grocery store today: milk, eggs, meat, and green beans.

5. Other Uses

Colons are used in business letter greetings:

Dear Mr. Marshall: To Whom it May Concern:

Colons are used between hours and minutes in a time notation:

I have a doctor’s appointment on Wednesday at 12:15 pm.

Colons are used between chapters and verses in biblical references:

John 3:16 is a very well-known verse in the Bible.

Colons are used to separate titles from subtitles:

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring