How to do it –

We use semi-colons (instead of commas) to separate items on a list when the items are not simply nouns by themselves. For example:

*I would like an orange, a pear and an apple.*

*I would like: a juicy, delicious, spherical orange; a delectable, tasty pear; and a mouth-watering, crunchy apple.*

This is because if we didn’t use the semi-colons there would be too many commas floating around and that would make it difficult to read… Just look…

*I would like a juicy, delicious, spherical orange, a delectable, tasty pear, and a mouth-watering, crunchy apple.*

… it makes it almost impossible to tell where the first item ends and the next one begins!

Did you also notice the colon? You’ve got to remember to use a colon to introduce the list! You should be able to read everything before the colon and then everything after *any* semi-colon in that list and for it to make sense (apart from the ‘*and’* for the last item on the list). For example:

*I would like a juicy, delicious, spherical orange.*

*I would like a delectable, tasty pear.*

*I would like a mouth-watering, crunchy apple.*

Make sense? Alright, it’s your turn!

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Add the colon and semi-colons to this passage. Don’t forget to make it *really* clear that it’s a semi-colon or a colon!

*We would be honoured if you would grace us with your presence at the annual Harvest ball, where there will be a thousand, shimmering candles to greet you on arrival the most succulent, juicy, tender hog-roast that your taste-buds will ever be privy to a professional orchestra to serenade you with the most exquisite of melodies.*

Now try writing your own passage that includes a colon to introduce the list and semi-colons to separate items. (Remember that the items can’t be one word – we have to use lots of adjectives or extra clauses to make it an expanded noun phrase!)