English Learning Intention: To use colons and semi- colons accurately.

Colons (: ) and semi colons (;) are punctuation marks that connect phrases in a sentence.

**Colons:**

Colons often introduce an explanation. The phrase that comes *after* the colon usually **explains** or **expands** on what came before it. It is also used before a **list**, **quotation**, **answer** or to provide **contrast**.

* **'Life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you're gonna get.'** In this example, the phrase that follows the colon explains why life is like a box of chocolates.
* **'I love watching films after school: comedies are my favourite.'** The phrase that follows the colon here expands on what the person loves about watching films.
* **'Tom hated his mum's cooking: soggy sprouts, smelly cabbage and lumpy mashed potatoes.'** In this example, a colon is used to introduce a list of things that Tom's mum cooks that he doesn't like. Can you also spot the alliteration?

## Semi - colons ;

#### Connecting ideas

The most common way to use a semi - colon is to help **join closely connected ideas** in a sentence. These sections must be independent and complete sentences, but closely linked in some way.

A full stop could often be used instead of a semi - colon, but the effect on the reader would change. As in this famous opening line from a Charles Dickens’ novel, A Tale of Two Cities:

* ‘It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.’
* ‘It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.’

#### Breaking up a list

Semi- colons can also be used when writing a list. In most lists, it’s enough to use commas to separate the items. However, if the list is more complicated semicolons may be needed to make the list clear for the reader:

* ‘When I pack for school, I make sure I have my calculator, compasses and ruler for maths and science lessons; drawing pencils, with coloured pastels, for art; shin pads, goalie gloves and boots for football; and my bus money.’

The semicolons are added to signal to the reader **which objects are grouped together** and make the overall list clearer.