Colons

“Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars, an appositive, an amplification, or an illustrative quotation” (7).

On Rhetoric:
“A colon tells the reader that what follows is closely related to the preceding clause. The colon has more effect than the comma, less power to separate than the semicolon, and more formality than the dash. It usually follows an independent clause and should not separate a verb from its complement or a preposition from its objective” (7-8).

A List of Particulars:

- Incorrect: Living in the apartments, I eat: PBJ sandwiches, fish sticks, and semi-sweet chocolate morsels.
- Correct: Living in the apartments, I eat the following: PBJ sandwiches, fish sticks, and semi-sweet chocolate morsels.
- Incorrect: Living in the apartments, the entrées I eat are: PBJ sandwiches, fish sticks, and semi-sweet chocolate morsels.
- Correct: Living in the apartments, I eat these sumptuous entrées: PBJ sandwiches, fish sticks, and semi-sweet chocolate morsels.

An Appositive or Re-naming:

- Correct: There’s only one toy I’ve kept from childhood: my doll, Babette.

An Amplification or Interpretation:

- Correct: Desserts can add to a healthy diet: fresh fruits, yogurt, and nuts have nutritional qualities.

An Illustrative Quotation:

- Correct: Every morning when I wake up for my 8:00 class, I remember a quote by T.S. Eliot: “I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.”

On Functions of Form:
The colon follows the salutation of a formal letter, separates hour from minute in time notation, separates the title from a subtitle, and separates the Bible chapter from its verse (8).

- Correct: To whom it may concern:
- Correct: My evening class starts at 8:15 pm.
- Correct: The song is 00:3:56 long.
- Correct: The Diary: A Secret Treasure
- Correct: Psalm 23:1