
Grammar: colons

Colons are used to indicate connections between different parts of a sentence. The three uses of colons are: to introduce lists and quotations, and to indicate further detail.

Using colons to introduce lists

Colons can be used to introduce simple lists, quotations, explanations and examples.

For example:

There are a few significant areas to explore: artistic impression, cultural representation and aesthetic presentation.

Using colons to introduce quotations

Colons can be used to introduce a quotation that follows on from the main point being made but is grammatically distinct.

For example:

The approach in question has merit within many fields of study: “The main use of qualitative research is to help researchers to grapple with the complexities of social life” (Silverman, 2018, p.45).

Using colons to indicate further detail

Colons can also be used in titles of academic books, dissertations or theses to indicate further detail.

For example:

Developing students’ learning in higher education: A study to investigate practice.