Comma Crowd Control

Choose the punctuation that keeps each list clear.

6.L.GC.1.48 "Mechanics: Use semicolons to separate items in a series or list when at least one of the items already contains commas. (Master)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

USE SEMICOLONS

Use semicolons between list items when at least one item already has a comma inside it.

At the festival, we met Lila Chen, the painter; Omar Ruiz, the drummer; and Priya Shah, the dancer.

USE COMMAS

Use commas between list items when none of the items has a comma inside it.

The puppy chased a leaf, a feather, and a toy.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle SEMICOLONS or COMMAS for each sentence, then choose two items, one from each category, and explain whether a list item already contains a comma.

1.	The tour stopped in Boise, Idaho; Reno, Nevada; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS
2.	Our speakers include Maya Patel, a scientist; Cole Brooks, a pilot; and Elena Cruz, a chef.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS
3.	The science lab needs goggles, gloves, and rulers.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS
4.	I borrowed a mystery set in Paris, France; a biography of Mae Jemison, an astronaut; and a guide to coral reefs.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS
5.	The seedlings need sunlight, water, and soil.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS
6.	Jordan packed socks, snacks, and sunscreen.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS
7.	The postcards came from Lima, Peru; Accra, Ghana; and Hanoi, Vietnam.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS
8.	The council elected Noor Ali, president; Ben Ortiz, treasurer; and Zoe Kim, secretary.	SEMICOLONS	COMMAS

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new sentence for SEMICOLONS and one new sentence for COMMAS.

SEMICOLONS _____

COMMAS _____

CHALLENGE

Write a sentence with four list items. Put commas inside at least two items, and use semicolons to separate every item.

ANSWER KEY

Comma Crowd Control

GRADE 6 · 6.L.GC.1.48

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The tour stopped in Boise, Idaho; Reno, Nevada; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.	**SEMICOLONS**	Each city and state is one list item with an internal comma.
2	Our speakers include Maya Patel, a scientist; Cole Brooks, a pilot; and Elena Cruz, a chef.	**SEMICOLONS**	Each speaker item includes a name and role separated by a comma.
3	The science lab needs goggles, gloves, and rulers.	**COMMAS**	None of the list items contains a comma.
4	I borrowed a mystery set in Paris, France; a biography of Mae Jemison, an astronaut; and a guide to coral reefs.	**SEMICOLONS**	Two list items contain commas inside them.
5	The seedlings need sunlight, water, and soil.	**COMMAS**	None of the list items contains a comma.
6	Jordan packed socks, snacks, and sunscreen.	**COMMAS**	None of the list items contains a comma.
7	The postcards came from Lima, Peru; Accra, Ghana; and Hanoi, Vietnam.	**SEMICOLONS**	Each place name includes a city and country separated by a comma.
8	The council elected Noor Ali, president; Ben Ortiz, treasurer; and Zoe Kim, secretary.	**SEMICOLONS**	Each person and position is a list item with an internal comma.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **SEMICOLONS**: The camp hired Eli Grant, a medic; Rosa Lee, a canoe guide; and Theo Park, a cook.
- **COMMAS**: The artist used blue, silver, and white paint.

Challenge: Visitors toured Madison, Wisconsin; Mobile, Alabama; Eugene, Oregon; and Dover, Delaware.

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item. For Part 2, students should state that semicolons are needed when at least one list item has an internal comma, while commas work when no list item has one. Accept original examples when the punctuation matches the category accurately.