Semicolon Sleuth

Sort sentences by how they use a semicolon.

8.L.GC.1.52 "Mechanics: Use semicolons, with or without a conjunctive adverb, to form compound and compound-complex sentences. (Master)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

CORRECT

A semicolon joins two closely related complete sentences. A conjunctive adverb can follow the semicolon, and it needs a comma after it.

The orchestra tuned its instruments; consequently, the audience settled quietly.

INCORRECT

The semicolon is not correctly joining two complete sentences. A dependent clause, a phrase, or a simple list cannot stand alone on one side.

Before sunrise; farmers loaded crates.

1 SORT

8 items

For Part 1, circle the category for each sentence; for Part 2, choose two items and explain how the sentence structure makes each use correct or incorrect.

1.	Maya finished the model; her partner checked the labels.	CORRECT INCORRECT
2.	The sky darkened; therefore, the game ended early.	CORRECT INCORRECT
3.	Since the gate was locked; we waited outside.	CORRECT INCORRECT
4.	While the oven warmed, Dad mixed the batter; the children set the table.	CORRECT INCORRECT
5.	The librarian placed; the novels on a cart.	CORRECT INCORRECT
6.	Our supplies included pencils; paper, glue, and rulers.	CORRECT INCORRECT
7.	Jalen studied all week; he felt ready for the quiz.	CORRECT INCORRECT
8.	After lunch ended; everyone returned to class.	CORRECT INCORRECT

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 with a correct semicolon use and one new sentence with an incorrect semicolon use.

CORRECT _____

INCORRECT _____

CHALLENGE

Write a compound-complex sentence that correctly uses a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb.

ANSWER KEY # Semicolon Sleuth

GRADE 8 · 8.L.GC.1.52

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	Maya finished the model; her partner checked the labels.	**CORRECT**	Both sides are complete sentences.
2	The sky darkened; therefore, the game ended early.	**CORRECT**	The semicolon joins two complete sentences, and therefore is followed by a comma.
3	Since the gate was locked; we waited outside.	**INCORRECT**	Since the gate was locked is a dependent clause, not a complete sentence.
4	While the oven warmed, Dad mixed the batter; the children set the table.	**CORRECT**	The semicolon joins two complete sentences. The first sentence includes a dependent clause.
5	The librarian placed; the novels on a cart.	**INCORRECT**	The librarian placed is incomplete because it needs an object.
6	Our supplies included pencils; paper, glue, and rulers.	**INCORRECT**	The semicolon incorrectly separates items in a simple list.
7	Jalen studied all week; he felt ready for the quiz.	**CORRECT**	Both sides are complete sentences.
8	After lunch ended; everyone returned to class.	**INCORRECT**	After lunch ended is a dependent clause, not a complete sentence.

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)

- **CORRECT**: The actors rehearsed for hours; the director watched from the balcony.
- **INCORRECT**: Because the river flooded; the campers changed plans.

Challenge: When the final whistle sounded, the crowd cheered; however, the officials reviewed the last play.

Correct: 1, 2, 4, and 7. Incorrect: 3, 5, 6, and 8. Accept explanations that identify whether both sides of the semicolon are complete sentences.