Semicolon Sort

Can both sides stand alone?

8.5.W.11 "Students will use a semicolon to punctuate compound and compound-complex sentences."

NAME _____ DATE _____

CORRECT USE

A semicolon can join two related complete thoughts. Each side must be able to stand alone as a sentence, even if one side begins with a dependent clause.

Lanterns flickered; shadows covered the cellar.

INCORRECT USE

A semicolon cannot join a complete thought to a dependent clause that cannot stand alone. Check the words on each side.

Although rain threatened; our picnic continued.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle CORRECT or INCORRECT for each item, then choose one item from each category and explain whether both sides of its semicolon can stand alone as sentences.

1.	Maya checked the map; Leo chose the trail.	CORRECT INCORRECT
2.	After the storm passed, the team took the field; the stands filled quickly.	CORRECT INCORRECT
3.	The robot stopped; because its battery died.	CORRECT INCORRECT
4.	While the paint dried; Jaden cleaned the brushes.	CORRECT INCORRECT
5.	The recipe needed more salt; Nia tasted the soup again.	CORRECT INCORRECT
6.	The crowd cheered; when the final song ended.	CORRECT INCORRECT
7.	If the bus arrives early, I will call you; we can meet at the library.	CORRECT INCORRECT
8.	The camera lost power; our interview ended early.	CORRECT INCORRECT

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Choose one item from each category and explain whether both sides of its semicolon can stand alone as sentences.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new sentence that uses a semicolon correctly and one that uses a semicolon incorrectly.

CORRECT _____

INCORRECT _____

CHALLENGE

Write a sentence that correctly uses a semicolon to join two complete thoughts and includes a dependent clause beginning with although.

ANSWER KEY # Semicolon Sort

GRADE 8 · 8.5.W.11

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	Maya checked the map; Leo chose the trail.	**CORRECT**	Both sides are independent clauses.
2	After the storm passed, the team took the field; the stands filled quickly.	**CORRECT**	Both sides can stand alone, and the first side includes a dependent clause.
3	The robot stopped; because its battery died.	**INCORRECT**	The clause beginning with because cannot stand alone.
4	While the paint dried; Jaden cleaned the brushes.	**INCORRECT**	The clause beginning with while cannot stand alone.
5	The recipe needed more salt; Nia tasted the soup again.	**CORRECT**	Both sides are independent clauses.
6	The crowd cheered; when the final song ended.	**INCORRECT**	The clause beginning with when cannot stand alone.
7	If the bus arrives early, I will call you; we can meet at the library.	**CORRECT**	Both sides can stand alone, and the first side includes a dependent clause.
8	The camera lost power; our interview ended early.	**CORRECT**	Both sides are independent clauses.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Task: Choose one item from each category and explain whether both sides of its semicolon can stand alone as sentences.
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 drummer set a steady beat; the dancers moved in time.
- **INCORRECT**: Before the movie started; we found our seats.

Challenge: Although the lights went out, the actors stayed calm; the audience waited quietly.

For Part 2, students should identify whether each side of the semicolon can stand alone. In Part 3, accept varied examples if the correct sentence joins two independent clauses and the incorrect sentence places a semicolon next to a dependent clause.