A colon indicates that what follows is a series, summary, or elaboration of what precedes it.

**Use a Colon to Introduce a Series**

When you use a colon to introduce a series, the material that precedes the colon must be an independent clause that is grammatically complete.

**Note:** Do not put a colon between a verb and its object or between a preposition and its object.

*Incorrect*—*The subsections that do not apply are: 201-1, 201-1(3)(b), and 201-1(3)(c).*

In the preceding example, a colon has been incorrectly placed between the verb and its objects. To correct the sentence either omit the colon or add an object between the verb and the colon.

*Correct*—*The subsections that do not apply are:* 201-1, 201-1(3)(b), and 201-1(3)(c).

*Correct*—*The subsections that do not apply are the following:* 201-1, 201-1(3)(b), and 201-1(3)(c).

**Use a Colon to Introduce a Summary, Elaboration, or Illustration**

*The damages were staggering: $1,986,000 in medical bills and $74,000 in lost wages.*

You can also use a colon to join two independent clauses if the first clause introduces the second, or if the two clauses have a cause and effect relationship.

*The DNA evidence is vital: it is our only proof that the defendant was at the scene.*

Be sure to double-space after a colon.

Adapted from: The Legal Writing Handbook—Oates, Enquist, & Kunsch; Plain English for Lawyers—Wydick
Prepared by Chris Dunn