Perhaps the most common semicolon mistake is using the punctuation mark when it is not needed.

**Use Semicolons as Follows:**

Link two or more related independent clauses with a semicolon unless they are already joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

> Wise men don’t need advice; fools don’t take it.
> - Benjamin Franklin

Use a semicolon (instead of a usual comma) to precede a coordinating conjunction when a sharp division between the two independent clauses is desired.

> Politicians may refrain from negative campaigning for a time; but when the race gets close, they can’t seem to resist trying to dredge up personal dirt to use on their opponent.

Before conjunctive adverbs (therefore, nevertheless, however, instead, thus, then) when they come between independent clauses. Place a comma after it.

> Bob Hope started his entertainment career in Vaudeville; however, he made his major mark as a film star and television comic.

To separate items in a series that contain commas or other punctuation. This makes complicated sentences easier to read.

> Bob Hope’s films include Road to Morocco, which also features Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour; The Paleface, a comic western with Jane Russell as Calamity Jane; and The Seven Little Foys, a biography about vaudeville performer, Eddie Foy, Sr.