Colons and Semicolons

Colons: There are three main uses of a colon:
1. To bring attention to the information that follows a colon, such as a quotation or a list.
   - A quotation: With all of the current political controversies surrounding human rights, it is important to consider the rights granted by the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”
     NOTE: Don’t use a colon to bring attention to another part of the sentence (between a verb and its object, unless the object is a quotation). Example:
     Some natural fibers are cotton, wool, silk, and linen.
   - A list: My typical morning consists of numerous activities: drinking coffee, reading the newspaper, and walking my dog.

2. To join two independent clauses if the second clause gives more information about the first independent clause.
   - Example: Faith is like love: it cannot be forced.

3. To set off a salutation or a heading that introduces information, to indicate hours and minutes, to show proportions, and to separate a title and a subtitle.
   - To Whom it May Concern:
     - Colons:
     - 7:30 P.M.
     - The ratio of women to men at WU was 7:1.
     - Understanding Communication: An Introduction for Beginning Writers

   NOTE: The main rule for correctly punctuating with colons is to make sure that what comes before the colon is a complete grammatical construction (most often a complete sentence).

Semicolons: There are three main uses of a semi-colon:
1. To separate two closely related independent clauses (complete sentences) that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, for, but, so, yet)
   - The florist arranged the flowers; we delivered the bouquet today.

2. To separate independent clauses linked with a transitional expression (however, accordingly, moreover, furthermore, therefore, nonetheless, meanwhile)
   - I like to eat pizza; however, I have eaten it every day for a week and do not wish to have it for lunch.

3. To separate the items in a list or series when there are other punctuation marks within the items themselves.
   - Her refrigerator contained apples, which were rotten; mustard, which was spicy; and mayonnaise, which had never been opened before.