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Oops!

Do I Do That?

Fortuitous, *adjective*:
happening by chance
or accident.

(Fortuitous
traditionally does *not*
mean lucky or
fortunate.)

YES:

"It was fortuitous his
boss was also at the
fundraiser."

NO:

"It was fortuitous her
paycheck was
deposited before the
rent check cleared."

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An Article On Semicolons Makes The New York Times?

An article featured on the New York Times Web site on February 18, 2008 focused on the public response to the proper, and rarely seen, use of a semicolon in a New York City Transit public service announcement. For a brief period of time, the article was also the most e-mailed piece of the entire site.

Those interviewed for the article, including linguist Noam Chomsky and author Lynn Truss (author of [Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation](#)), praised writer Neil Neches for his excellent use of the semicolon in the advertisement.

Most writers shy away from using a semicolon (;) or don't know when to use it instead of its close relative, the colon (:). Despite the confusing lessons you may have had in elementary school, it's actually quite easy to learn the difference.

- **Semicolons** connect two separate ideas that, if separated, would still make two proper sentences. For example, in reference to the newspapers many subway riders leave behind, the sign mentioned in the New York Times article read, "Please put it in a trashcan; that's good news for everyone." If you substituted a period for the semicolon, both phrases would still work as sentences. But since they are connected in thought, the semicolon helps note that connection. Semicolons can help eliminate a lot of short, choppy sentences in your writing.

- **Colons**, in contrast, connect an idea with a word, phrase, or clause. Examples include:

~ In her mind, there was only one clear choice for president: Barack Obama.

~ During the football game, he kept his mind on two things: the ball and the championship trophy.

~ She had to keep reminding herself of her mantra for the day: never argue during a job interview.

While this last example may seem to meet the 'can stand on their own' requirement for phrases before and after semicolons, it needs a colon for one main reason: the first part of the sentence sets an expectation. What comes after the colon follows through on that expectation.

There are, of course, more detailed rules and other specific uses for colons and semicolons. If you'd like to learn more, feel free to e-mail info@kelcilynn.com for all the details you can handle!

Online Dictionaries

While working furiously on a project, the last thing you want to do is break your stride while you research the spelling, grammar rule, or proper usage of a word. The following Web sites offer excellent resources and are easily bookmarked in your browser:

- Google.com
Search for term as *define: term*
- Dictionary.com
Offers dictionary, thesaurus, and proper usage information

Why Does She Always Type 'Web site'?

"Web site" is the preferred spelling (as opposed to *website*, *Website*, or *web site*) according to the Associate Press (AP) Stylebook, The Chicago Manual of Style, and the World Wide Web Consortium.