

Using semicolon with transitional adverbs

A transitional adverb (e.g. however, therefore, consequently, nevertheless) usually starts a new sentence. However, sometimes writers separate the two clauses with a semicolon to enable a smoother transition.

He had lost his appetite and was steadily losing weight. Therefore, he decided to consult a doctor.

Here the sentence beginning with the transitional adverb is separated from the previous sentence with a full stop. A semicolon is also possible here.

He had lost his appetite and was steadily losing weight; therefore, he decided to consult a doctor.

Note that a comma cannot be used here. However, a comma is used to separate the transitional adverb from the rest of the sentence.

When to use a semicolon

A transitional adverb always begins a new sentence. However, a full stop does not afford a smooth transition from one sentence to the next. If you feel that the ideas shown by the two clauses are closely connected, you can use a semicolon instead of a full stop. The choice is yours.

Note that the clause following a semicolon begins with a small letter.

He missed his train; as a result, he was late for the meeting.

I missed my flight; however, I still managed to arrive on time.

He does not hate cricket; on the contrary, he quite likes it.

The security guards were not trained in fire-fighting; therefore, we called the fire force.

It was extremely foggy; nevertheless, they decided to play the game.

Note that it is wrong to connect the two clauses with a comma. This is a very common mistake.

The transitional adverb, however, is very often used like this.

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I was not feeling well. However, I decided to attend the meeting.

OR

I was not feeling well; however, I decided to attend the meeting.

BUT NOT I was not feeling well, however, I decided to attend the meeting.