

twinkl

Using Semi-colons and Colons



Using a Semi-colon

A semi-colon contains a comma and a full stop. It is helpful to remember this. A semi-colon is stronger than a comma, but not as final as a full stop.

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Semi-colons are used to link sentences that are closely related.

For example:

The wood was silent and absolutely still; Little Red Riding Hood realised that she had not truly seen its beauty until now.

A semi-colon works perfectly here to allow a smooth transition between sentences.

A full stop between the sentences might detract from the impact of Little Red Riding Hood's observation and create too great a 'stop'. Using a comma here would be incorrect; a comma cannot be used to link two independent sentences.

Semi-colons can also be used to link one sentence to another closely related sentence that uses a **conjunctive adverb**.

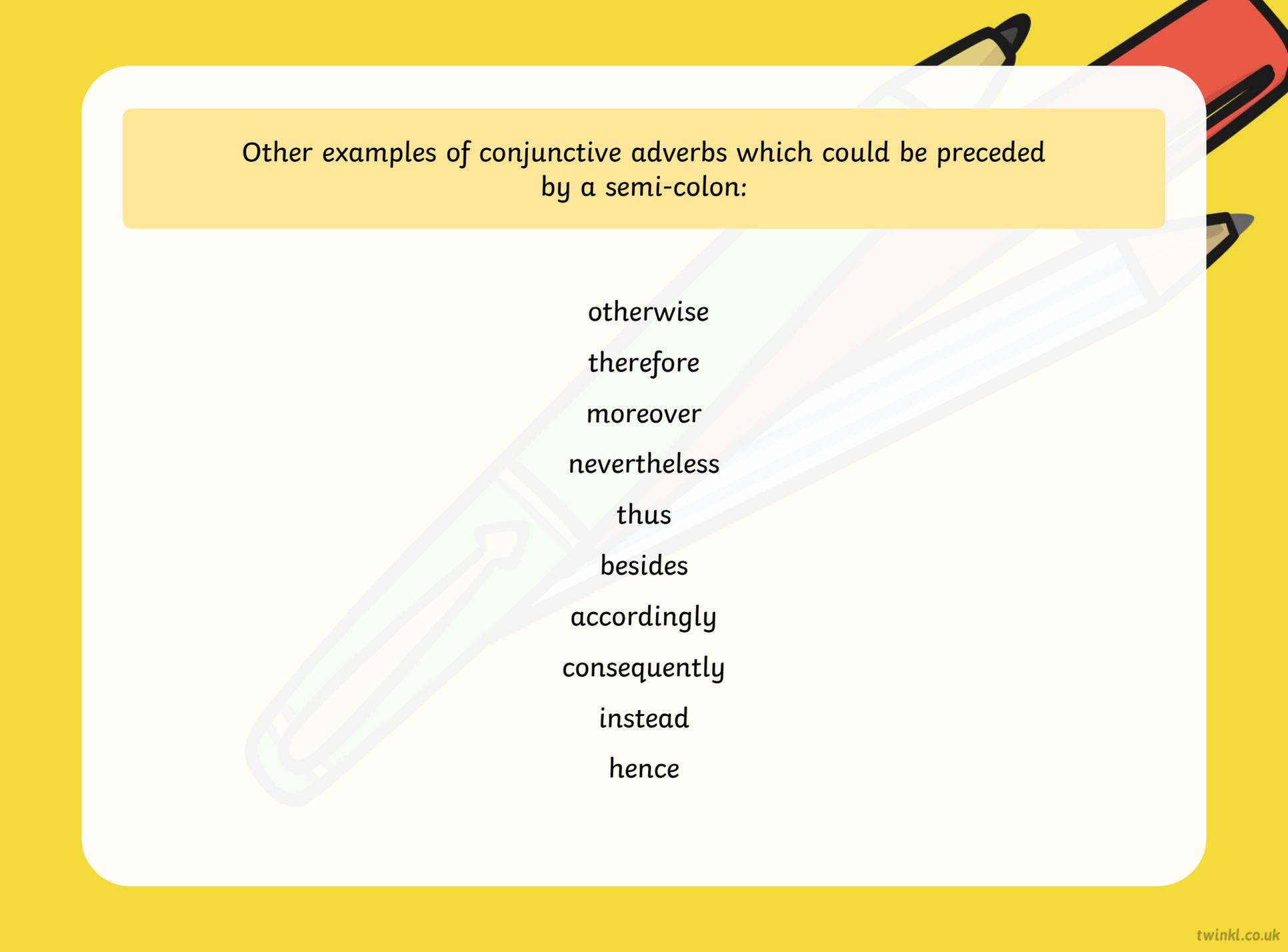
For example:

The wolf liked Little Red Riding Hood. Nevertheless, he was looking forward to eating her.

The wolf liked Little Red Riding Hood; nevertheless, he was looking forward to eating her.

Little Red Riding Hood didn't like the forest much. However, she did like visiting Grandma.

Little Red Riding Hood didn't like the forest much; however, she did like visiting Grandma.



Other examples of conjunctive adverbs which could be preceded by a semi-colon:

otherwise

therefore

moreover

nevertheless

thus

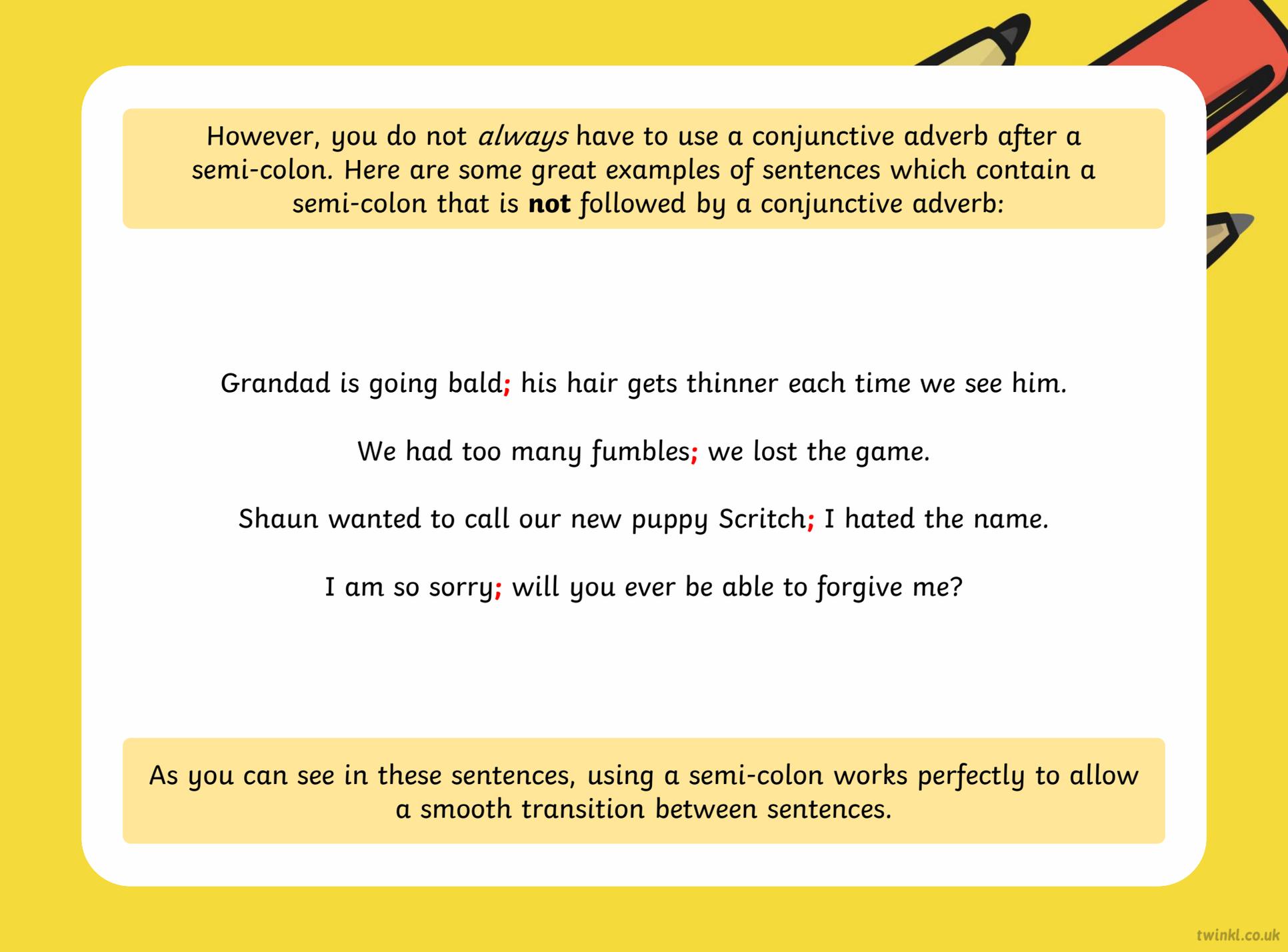
besides

accordingly

consequently

instead

hence



However, you do not *always* have to use a conjunctive adverb after a semi-colon. Here are some great examples of sentences which contain a semi-colon that is **not** followed by a conjunctive adverb:

Grandad is going bald; his hair gets thinner each time we see him.

We had too many fumbles; we lost the game.

Shaun wanted to call our new puppy Scritch; I hated the name.

I am so sorry; will you ever be able to forgive me?

As you can see in these sentences, using a semi-colon works perfectly to allow a smooth transition between sentences.

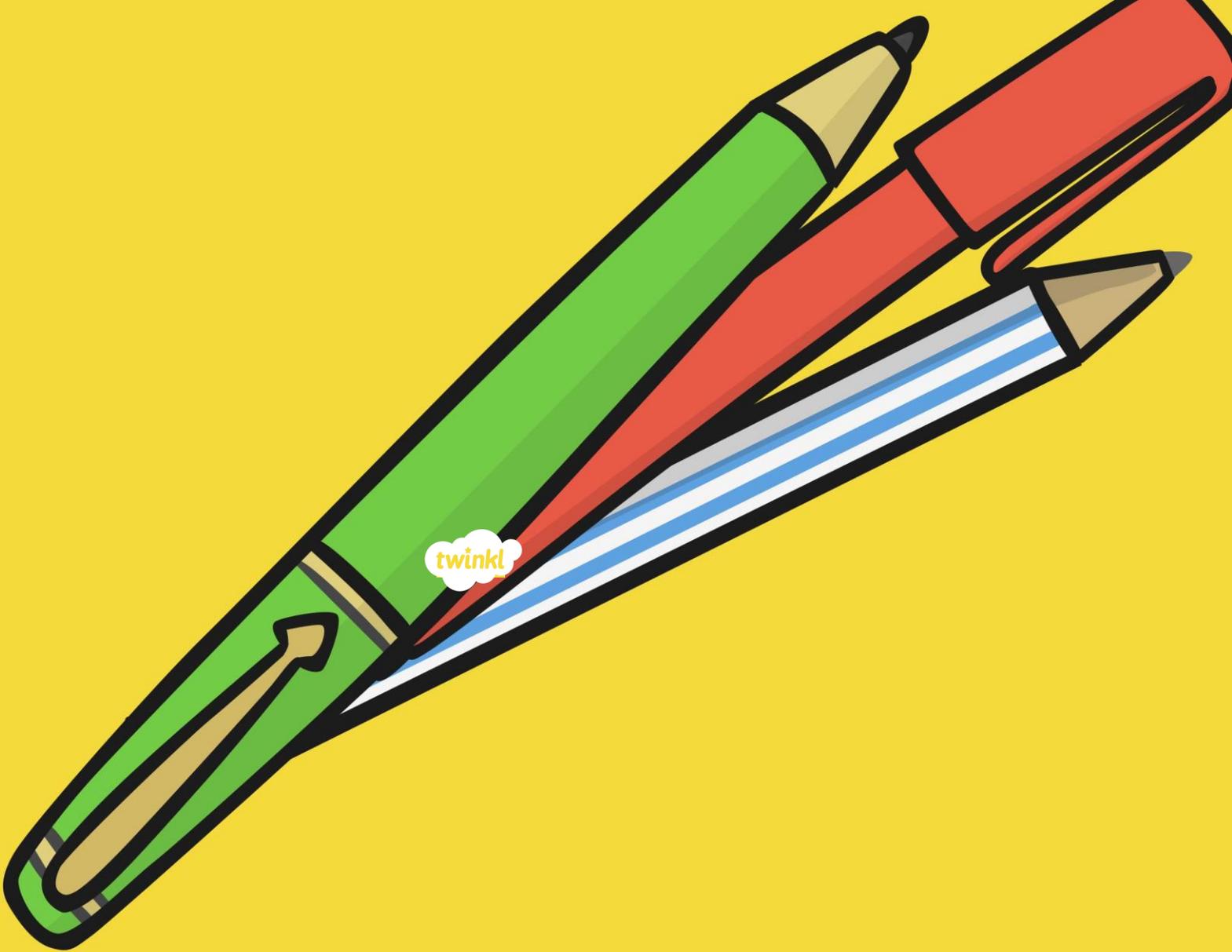
A semi-colon can also be used to separate items in a list (where the list also contains commas).

For example:

There are lots of characters in the story: Big Bad Wolf, the baddie; Little Red Riding Hood, the heroine; Grandma, the victim; and Mr Woodcutter, the rescuer.

We spoke to the main characters: Grandma, 81; Big Bad Wolf, 30; Little Red Riding Hood, 11; and Mr Woodcutter, 55.





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