The Colon:

A colon represents a pause for the insertion of further information, lists, expansion, or elaboration on what preceded it. Think of the colon as a gateway into the next train of thought.

The colon often takes the place of phrases such as “that is” or “namely” because it is providing extra information.

Examples:
I wanted to go to the museum to see my favorite artist, that is, Rembrandt.
I wanted to go to the museum to see my favorite artist: Rembrandt.

Janel needed just one thing from the store, namely Italian bread.
Janel needed just one thing from the store: Italian bread.

Use a colon to introduce a list:

Example: I enjoy the following activities: running, cycling, hiking, and skiing.

Use a colon after a complete statement when you are introducing closely related ideas that elaborate on the preceding idea:

Example: The science experiment was a success: the researchers were able to prove that a rock is denser than water.

Use a colon to expand on an idea:

Example: The university faculty members noticed an increase in student participation on campus: more freshman and sophomores were attending student planned activities than in previous years.

Example: Sam was caught between two worlds: he loved the excitement of the city, but he had an innate appreciation for nature and the beauty of the countryside.
**Do not use a colon right after a verb in a sentence.** The colon is often used to introduce something. The verb may also be introducing; therefore, it would be redundant to use a colon right after the verb.

Example: My favorite foods include spaghetti, eggplant, and chicken divan.

You do not need a colon after include because “include” is introducing your list already.

**To Capitalize or not to capitalize?**

There are some instances where you may have to capitalize the first word after your colon.

*Capitalize if the sentence following your colon is a quote.*

Example: In his work, *The Mysterious Stranger*, Mark Twain gives the reader a new perspective on happiness: “Sanity and happiness are an impossible combination.”

*Capitalize if the statement that comes after your colon is more than one sentence.*

Example: There are two reasons why the baseball team did not make it to the playoffs: First of all, they had a horrible pitching coach. Secondly, the players did not respect one another enough to work well together on the field.

******************************************************************************

The following resources were consulted in the design of this handout:


******************************************************************************

Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute this handout, providing that the following information remain intact:

This page is located at: [http://www.strose.edu/writingcenter](http://www.strose.edu/writingcenter)
The College of Saint Rose Writing Center, 2007 Designed by Jessica Brouker