

## Lists: Basic Rules and Examples

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The two main types of lists are “run-in” and “displayed.” Punctuation and capitalization depend on whether the list is introduced by a complete sentence or a partial sentence. Items must be grammatically parallel (e.g., all phrases beginning with gerunds).

The **run-in** presents a series of short items within a sentence or paragraph.

- Run-ins are best used to emphasize the number of items or to show the order of their importance.
- To determine whether or not to use an introductory colon, mentally replace it with a period (both types of end punctuation).
- Items are indicated by numbers or letters, usually within parentheses, and the parenthetical should appear on the same line as the word that follows it.
- Use semicolons between items when a series is lengthy or has internal commas.

### **Examples of run-ins introduced by a complete sentence** (with a colon):

Three pieces of identification are necessary: (1) a valid passport, (2) a valid driver’s license, and (3) a notarized copy of the birth certificate.

The membership of the new committee follows: (1) private sector executives, six; (2) holders of public office, eight; and (3) individual citizens, nine.

### **Example of a run-in introduced by a partial sentence** (without a colon):

The major impediments to reaching resolutions are (1) misrepresentation of the issues and (2) absenteeism from meetings.

The **displayed** list contains three or more items, listed in a vertical column.

- Indicate items consistently by bullets, numbers, letters, or other typographical symbols. If numbers or letters are used, each should be followed by a period and the periods should be aligned.
- Indent each set of nested bullets .25” from the previous margin (as this page illustrates), and use hanging indentation (aligning the left margin of each line within a bullet, as illustrated in this two-line example).
- Double-space between bullets if any bullet in the series spans more than one line.
- Format and punctuation depend upon whether the list is introduced by a complete sentence or a partial sentence.







