Four Semicolon Rules

1. Use a semicolon to separate two closely related independent clauses that are not joined by one of the coordinating conjunctions:

   and,   for,   but,   nor,   or,   so,   yet

   Example: Jewel was the only nurse; the surgeon needed her.

2. Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction when there are two or more commas in one of both of the clauses.

   Example: He overhauled the engine, repaired the dent, and replaced the tires; and when he had finished, he sold the car.

3. Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses that are joined by conjunctive adverbs.

   Example: Styles in music change; consequently, today's top ten harmonies will be tomorrow's lost chords.

4. Use a semicolon to separate units of a series when the units themselves contain commas.

   Example: Maude, the violinist; Herbert, the trombonist; and Grace, the noted harpist, were waiting for their instruments to arrive.

   Note: A comma, not a semicolon, follows the last item in the series.