semicolons and commas

SEMICOLONs

1. To join two complete sentences.
I like dogs; I also like cats.

2. To separate items in a list.
I like dogs, cats, and pandas.

3. To separate 3+ items in a list that contains internal commas.
My dog likes to swim; chase sticks, balls, and frisbees; and take walks.

4. To separate two complete sentences joined by a conjunction.
I like dogs, and I like cats.

COMMAS

1. To separate 3+ items in a list.
I like dogs, cats, and pandads.

2. To separate two complete sentences joined by a conjunction.
I like dogs, and I like cats.

3. To separate a partial thought that comes before a complete sentence.
Because I wanted a pet, I adopted a dog.

4. To separate extra information in the middle of a sentence.
My dog, Spot, loves to dig holes.

⇒ Conjunctions:
and | but | so | or | for | nor | yet.

⇒ Don’t use a comma if the part after and is not a complete sentence.
I like dogs and cats.

⇒ Don’t use a comma if the complete sentence comes first.
I adopted a dog because I wanted a pet.

⇒ Extra information works like an aside. If you took it out, the sentence would still make sense.

⇒ Necessary information can’t be taken out of the sentence. The sentence needs it to make sense. We wouldn’t put commas around necessary information.

For example:
My dog Spot loves to dig holes, but my dog Bingo doesn’t.

This sentence needs the dogs’ names to make sense. We can’t take them out, so we wouldn’t put commas around them.
Complete sentences:
Also called independent clauses. They can stand on their own as a sentence. They always have a subject and a verb.

Partial thought:
Also called dependent clauses. They aren’t complete thoughts, so they cannot stand on their own as a sentence.

Conjunctions: for | and | but | so | or | nor | yet
Conjunctions join ideas together. There are seven total (listed above). The examples below use and, but you could use any of the conjunctions.

Use a semicolon:
1. complete sentence; complete sentence.
2. list item; list item with internal commas; and list item.

Use a comma:
1. list item, list item, and list item.
2. complete sentence, and complete sentence.
3. partial thought, complete sentence.
4. Start of sentence, extra information, rest of sentence.