Testing Your Understanding: The Colon

Place the colon where needed in the following sentences. Cross out any misplaced colons. If the sentence is correct as written, indicate with a “C.” An answer key follows.

1. The local high school wrestlers placed well in the regional competition: they received two First Place, one Second Place, and three Third Place awards.
2. Her stories were based on: her Uncle’s tales of his time in Japan.
3. The bride’s nephew had very important assignments during the ceremony, hold the pillow up, don’t drop the ring, walk slowly to the altar, then stand till and smile.
4. The announcer called out the four winning numbers as follows. Three, twelve, twenty-two, and fifty-six.
5. There is nothing more delicious than our family’s Christmas dinner; turkey with gravy, dressing, mashed potatoes, yams, green beans, buttery rolls and pumpkin pie smothered in whipped cream.
6. My favorite quotation was found on a slip of paper in a hotel room, “Friendship is like a baked potato; it is best when it’s kept warm.”
7. If I ever complete my book, the title will be *Television: Our Road to Ruin*.
8. Many common house plants, such as: mistletoe and philodendron, are poisonous to pets.
9. The secret ingredients consisted of: vanilla, cocoa powder and cardamom.
10. The team received instructions from the angry coach: “Shake it off and play ball!”

Answers below:

**Answer Key:**
1. The local high school wrestlers placed well in the regional competition; they received two First Place, one Second Place and three Third Place awards. (see # 2 – 2nd clause explains)
2. Her stories were based on her Uncle’s tales of his time in Japan. (see common errors – avoid using colons between a proposition & its object)
3. The bride’s nephew had very important assignments during the ceremony: hold the pillow up, don’t drop the ring, walk slowly to the altar, then stand till and smile. (see # 2 – 2nd clause summarizes)
4. The announcer called out the four winning numbers as follows: three, twelve, twenty-two, and fifty-six. (see # 1 – directs attention to the list)
5. There is nothing more delicious than our family’s Christmas dinner: turkey with gravy, dressing, mashed potatoes, yams, green beans, buttery rolls and pumpkin pie smothered in whipped cream. (see # 1 – an appositive – words describing the dinner)
6. My favorite quotation was found on a slip of paper in a hotel room: “Friendship is like a baked potato; it is best when it’s kept warm.” (see # 1 – introduces the quotation)
7. If I ever complete my book, the title will be Television: Our Road to Ruin. (see # 3 – between a title & a subtitle)
8. Many common house plants, such as mistletoe and philodendron, are poisonous to pets. (see common errors – avoid using after such as)
9. The secret ingredients consisted of vanilla, cocoa powder and cardamom. (see common errors – avoid using colons between a preposition & its object)
10. The team received instructions from the angry coach: “Shake it off and play ball!” (see # 2 – 2nd clause explains)