

Using Transitions Effectively

What do Transitions Do?

Transitional words and phrases are also called signal words. They are placed at key points to lead the reader through the sentences and paragraphs. Using transitional words will help you achieve clear and coherent communication with your audience.

When writers connect sentences and paragraphs, they provide a sense of movement that allows their readers to follow the main and subordinate ideas easily and, as a result, understand the writer's purpose and message.

Clear transitions are essential to the coherence of paragraphs and essays. There are several types of transitions, each leading the reader to make certain connections or assumptions about the areas you are connecting, based on the words or phrases you choose. Some lead the reader forward and imply the "building" of an idea or thought, while others make the reader compare ideas or draw conclusions from the preceding thoughts. A list of common transitional words and phrases can be found on the back.

Transitions Between Paragraphs

When linking two paragraphs, the writer must explain how the two paragraphs are connected logically. Transitional words or phrases sometimes will be precisely what you need to underscore for your readers the intellectual relationship between paragraphs—to help them navigate your essay. Very often, such transitions:

- ☞ Address an essential similarity or dissimilarity (likewise, in contrast, despite, etc)
- ☞ Suggest a meaningful ordering, often temporal (first, in addition) or causal (thus, therefore)
- ☞ In a longer paper, remind the reader of what has earlier been argued (in short, as has been said, on the whole).

Tips for Transitioning

Since clarity and effectiveness of your transitions will depend greatly on how well you have organized your paper, you may want to evaluate your paper's organization before you work on transitions. In the margins of your draft, summarize in a word or two what each paragraph is about or how it fits into your analysis as a whole. This exercise should help you to see the order and connection between your ideas more clearly.

If after doing this exercise you find that you still have difficulty linking your ideas together in a coherent fashion, your problem may not be with transitions but with organization. Perhaps something crucial is missing between this paragraph and its neighbors—most likely an idea or a piece of evidence or both. Maybe the paragraph is misplaced, and logically belongs elsewhere.

Common transitional words and phrases can be found on the next page...

COMMON TRANSITIONAL WORDS & PHRASES

To Indicate TIME ORDER

- earlier
 - former
 - formerly
 - heretofore
 - in retrospect
 - in the past
 - not long ago
 - of late
 - preceding
 - previously
 - prior to
 - recently
 - yesterday
-
- at present
 - at the same time
 - at this moment
 - by now
 - concurrently
 - currently
 - immediately
 - now
 - presently
 - right away
 - simultaneously
 - until now
-
- henceforth
 - hereafter
 - in the future
-
- after a long time
 - after a short while
 - afterward
 - later on
 - not long after
 - right after
 - soon after
 - thereafter

To Indicate CONTRAST

- a clear difference
- a distinct difference
- a striking distance
- a strong distinction
- against
- although
- although this may be true
- an opposing view
- and yet
- another distinction
- balanced against
- but
- by contrast
- contrarily
- contrary to
- conversely
- counter to
- despite
- despite the fact that
- different from
- even though
- for
- however
- in contrast
- in opposition to
- nevertheless
- nonetheless
- on the contrary
- on the other hand
- opposing
- otherwise
- regardless
- the antithesis of
- the reverse of
- to differ from
- to differentiate
- to oppose
- up against
- whereas
- while
- yet

To Indicate COMPARISON

- after all
- along the same lines
- also
- analogous to
- as compared with
- as well as
- balanced against
- by comparison
- comparable
- comparatively
- compared to
- consistent with
- conversely
- correlate
- correspondingly
- equal
- equally important
- equivalent
- however
- identical
- in a similar fashion
- in comparison
- in contrast
- in like manner
- in the same manner
- in the same way
- like
- likewise
- matching
- meanwhile
- nevertheless
- of little difference
- parallel to
- relative to
- relatively
- resemble
- resembling
- similarly
- synonymous
- the next likeness
- to the same extent
- too
- uniformly
- where
- whereas

To Indicate CAUSE & EFFECT

- accordingly
- as a consequence
- as a result
- as a result of
- because
- because of this
- by reason of
- caused by
- consequently
- due to
- following that
- for
- for this purpose
- for this reason
- furthermore
- hence
- henceforth
- in conclusion
- in effect
- in view of
- it follows that
- on account of
- otherwise
- owing to
- so
- subsequently
- the end result
- the outcome
- the ramifications of
- then
- thereafter
- therefore
- thus
- to this end
- accordingly
- as a result
- consequently
- hence
- it follows, then
- since
- so
- then
- therefore
- thus

Courtesy the Odegaard Writing & Research Center
<http://www.depts.washington.edu/owrc>

Adapted from UW Expository Writing Program and Edmonds Community College Writing Center handouts

To Indicate SEQUENCE

- at first
- at the beginning
- at the onset
- commencing with
- earlier
- embark
- first
- from this point
- in the first place
- initially
- once
- once upon a time
- starting with
- to begin with

-
- after that
 - following that
 - immediately following
 - in the second place
 - in turn
 - later on
 - next
 - on the next occasion
 - second /secondly
 - so far
 - subsequently
 - the following week
 - the next day
 - the next time
 - the second stage
 - twice

-
- in the third place
 - last
 - last of all
 - third
 - at last
 - lastly
 - in the last place
 - the latter
 - at the end
 - in the end
 - final
 - finally
 - the final point
 - to conclude
 - in conclusion

To Indicate ADDITION

- after
- afterward
- again
- also
- and
- and then
- besides
- concurrently
- consequently
- equally important
- finally
- following this
- further
- furthermore
- hence
- in addition
- in fact
- indeed
- lastly
- moreover
- next
- nor
- now
- previously
- simultaneously
- so too
- subsequently
- therefore
- thus
- too
- what's more

To Provide An EXAMPLE

- a case in point
- after all
- an analogy
- analogous to
- another way
- as an example
- as an illustration
- consider
- consider as an illustration
- for example
- for instance
- for instance
- for one thing
- in another case
- in fact
- in one example
- in order to clarify
- in other words
- in particular
- in the following manner
- in the same manner
- in this case
- in this situation
- in this specific instance
- more exactly
- namely
- on this occasion
- specifically
- such as
- suppose that
- take the case of
- that is
- to be exact
- to bring to light
- to clarify
- to demonstrate
- to exemplify
- to explain
- to illuminate
- to illustrate
- to put another way
- to show
- to take a case in point
- to take a case in point

To EMPHASIZE or INTENSIFY

- above all
- actually
- after all
- as a matter of fact
- certainly
- decidedly
- definitely
- equally important
- especially
- furthermore
- in fact
- increasingly important
- indeed
- more emphatically
- more important
- moreover
- most important of all
- most of all
- of great concern
- of major concern
- primarily
- significantly
- surely
- the crux of the matter
- the main issue
- the main problem
- the major reason
- there is no question that
- to be sure
- to emphasize
- to recapitulate
- very likely
- without a doubt
- without doubt
- without question

To Indicate EXCEPTION

- despite
- however
- in spite of
- nevertheless
- of course
- once in a while
- sometimes
- still
- yet

To ELABORATE

- actually
- by extension
- in short
- in other words
- to put it another way
- to put it bluntly
- to put it succinctly
- ultimately

To CONCEDE

- admittedly
- although it is true that
- granted
- I concede that
- of course
- naturally
- to be sure

To SUMMARIZE or CONCLUDE

- accordingly
- as a result
- as has been noted
- as I have said
- as I have shown
- consequently
- hence
- in brief
- in conclusion
- on the whole
- on the whole
- summing up
- therefore
- thus
- to conclude
- as a result
- consequently
- hence
- in conclusion, then
- in short
- in sum, then
- it follows, then
- so
- the upshot of all this is that
- therefore
- thus
- to sum up
- to summarize

To Connect CLAUSES***COORDINATION CONJUNCTIONS**

- and
- but
- for
- nor
- or
- so
- yet

To Connect CLAUSES cont.***SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS**

- after
- although
- as
- as if
- as though
- because
- before
- even
- even if
- even though
- if
- in order that
- once
- rather than
- since
- so that
- than
- that
- though
- unless
- until
- when
- whenever
- while

*** NOTE:**

Conjunctions do more than simply link and connect ideas. Conjunctions combine clauses which transitional words cannot do. This is a significant difference between conjunctions and transitional words