



Academic Support Center

Using Transitions

Transitions are like bridges between parts of your paper. They help establish connections between sentences, paragraphs, and sections of your papers. Transitions signal relationships between ideas such as: “Another example coming up—stay alert!” or “Here’s an exception to my previous statement” or “Although this idea appears to be true, here’s the real story.” Basically, transitions provide the reader with directions for how to understand the logic of how your ideas fit together.

How can you tell whether you need to work on your transitions? Here are some possible clues:

- Your instructor has written comments like “choppy,” “jumpy,” “abrupt,” “flow,” “need signposts,” or “how is this related?” on your papers.
- Your readers (instructors, friends, or classmates) tell you that they had trouble following your organization or train of thought.
- You tend to write the way you think—and your brain often jumps from one idea to another pretty quickly.
- You wrote your paper in several discrete “chunks” and then pasted them together.
- You are working on a group paper; the draft you are working on was created by pasting pieces of several people’s writing together.

Types of Transitions: A transition can be a single word, a phrase, a sentence, or an entire paragraph. In each case, it functions the same way: first, the transition either directly summarizes the content of a preceding sentence, paragraph, or section or implies such a summary (by reminding the reader of what has come before). Then it helps the reader anticipate or comprehend the new information that you wish to present.

1. **Transitions between sections**—Particularly in longer works, it may be necessary to include transitional paragraphs that summarize for the reader the information just covered and specify the relevance of this information to the discussion in the following section.
2. **Transitions between paragraphs**—If you have done a good job of arranging paragraphs so that the content of one leads logically to the next, the transition will highlight a relationship that already exists by summarizing the previous paragraph and suggesting something of the content of the paragraph that follows. A transition between paragraphs can be a word or two (*however, for example, similarly*), a phrase, or a sentence. Transitions can be at the end of the first paragraph, at the beginning of the second paragraph, or in both places.
3. **Transitions within paragraphs**—As with transitions between sections and paragraphs, transitions within paragraphs act as cues by helping readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases.

Transitional Expressions

Effectively constructing each transition often depends upon your ability to identify words or phrases that will indicate for the reader the *kind* of logical relationships you want to convey. Below is a list of some of the most commonly used transitions.

To Add:

and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further, furthermore, nor, too, next, lastly, what's more, moreover, in addition, first (second, etc.),

To Compare:

whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary, by comparison, where, compared to, up against, balanced against, vis a vis, but, although, conversely, meanwhile, after all, in contrast, although this may be true

To Prove:

because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is

To Show Exception:

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

To Show Time:

immediately, thereafter, soon, after a few hours, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first (second, etc.), next, and then

To Repeat:

in brief, as I have said, as I have noted, as has been noted,

To Emphasize:

definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly, always, forever, perennially, eternally, never, emphatically, unquestionably, without a doubt, certainly, undeniably, without reservation

To Show Sequence:

first, second, third, and so forth. A, B, C, and so forth. next, then, following this, at this time, now, at this point, after, afterward, subsequently, finally, consequently, previously, before this, simultaneously, concurrently, thus, therefore, hence, next, and then, soon

To Give an Example:

for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate, as an illustration, to illustrate

To Summarize or Conclude:

in brief, on the whole, summing up, to conclude, in conclusion, as I have shown, as I have said, hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, as a result, consequently, on the whole,