

Transitions



Transitions are words and phrases that connect and show relationships between ideas in a piece of writing. Transitions also help the reader more easily follow the writer's progression of thought and enhance the clarity of the ideas. Without transitions, it can be difficult to follow the flow of ideas from paragraph to paragraph and from sentence to sentence. This handout explores a few of the ways you can use and choose transitions in your writing.

Using Transitions

Transitions belong between

- **Sections** (dividing the major ideas or topics of the writing)
- **Paragraphs** (dividing the minor ideas of the writing)
- **Sentences** (showing relationships between them)
- **Parts of sentences** (indicating how phrases connect)

Transitions should refer to the previous idea while still moving the reader on to the next, thereby showing the relationship between the two ideas. This can be done at the section, paragraph, sentence, or word level. Without that connection, your reader may become confused, and your writing will generally lack what is often referred to as *flow*.

Cohesion or Flow

The basic principle underlying transitioning is **cohesion**, or in other words, how sentences begin and end. Cohesion produces a sense of **flow** that enables your reader to clearly follow your ideas. In order to be cohesive, your sentences should build on ground that has been covered in the preceding sentence; they start with the familiar and then expand into what your reader does not know yet.

Example: Chocolate comes in all shapes and sizes, ranging in flavor from white to raspberry to cookies and cream. Just as chocolate types vary in taste, they can also differ in their nutritional components. For instance, dark chocolate is uniquely known for its antioxidant properties that promote heart health.

Here are some questions to ask yourself in order to assess the cohesiveness of your writing:

- Is there context for the information presented? Is there a gap between ideas?
- If so, what is the connection between the two? How can I articulate that bridge?

Focus on the Idea

Although transition words or phrases can help a reader move from one sentence to the next, the foundational principle of transitioning is in the ideas. If the ideas at the sentence level do not connect, adding a transition word or phrase will not fix the problem.

Example: For instance, dark chocolate is uniquely known for its antioxidant properties that promote heart health. Consequently, 75% dark chocolate is the perfect blend of bitter and sweet.

Consequently can function as a transitional word, but in this case, the idea of dark chocolate having healthy properties has nothing to do with the taste of 75% dark chocolate. In order to transition well and be cohesive, the second sentence might go on to explain more about specific antioxidant properties or their effects on a person's cardiovascular health.

Transition Words and Phrases

Transition words and phrases indicate or emphasize the relationship between ideas. The categories below are divided according to the function of each transition word or phrase. This is not a comprehensive list. Since transitions are more of a way of thinking than a limited list of words, many other words or phrases not on this list can serve as transitions.

Addition

Again
Also
Another
In addition
Moreover
Too

Similarity

Accordingly
Also
Comparatively
Likewise
Moreover
Similarly

Difference

Although
But
Conversely
However
In contrast
Nevertheless
On the contrary
On the other hand
Yet

Chronology

Afterward
Before
During
Earlier
First
Immediately
Meanwhile
Next
Second
Simultaneously
Soon
Still
Then
While

Location

Above
Below
Beyond
Farther
Further
Here
Nearby
Opposite
There
To the left/right

Result

And
As well
Besides
Accordingly
As a result
Consequently
For this reason
So
Then
Therefore
Thereupon
Thus
Because
Since

Example

For example
For instance
In fact
Namely
Specifically
Further
Furthermore
In addition
Such as
To illustrate

Summary

Finally
Generally
In brief
In conclusion
In other words
In short
In summary
On the whole
That is
Therefore
To sum up

General

Admittedly
Assuredly
Granted
To be sure
At this level
Basically
Certainly
Generally speaking
In other words
In this situation
Indeed
Certainly
Surely