



# Using Transitions

Transitions are words and/or phrases that create connections between ideas in sentences and paragraphs. Effective use of transitions not only creates smooth, readable writing, but also provides important signals that help readers interpret your ideas. This handout will provide guidance about how to use transitions in your writing, with examples, as well as some common transitions associated with particular writing goals. There is also an activity to practice identification of transitions.

## Creating Connections

Transition words and phrases are useful to signal that a writer is shifting between ideas and establish coherent linkages between and within sentences and paragraphs. For this reason, you should choose transitions with care. Some uses of transitions at the paragraph level include: linking to previous sentences, providing examples to demonstrate a point, and showing how new information and ideas connect to ideas previously introduced.

### Example

The paragraph below contains the following transition words and phrases:

1. Although,
2. Moreover
3. For example.

Within the paragraph. Within the paragraph the transition words and phrases are bolded and accompanied with their corresponding number.

### Example Paragraph:

**[1] Although** public transportation may appear to be an expensive proposition for many students, its use leads to a more environmentally friendly outcome for Calgary. **[2] Moreover**, public transport can provide a more economically helpful transportation approach for students. **[3] For example**, students who use public transportation in their daily activities will save on fuel costs and contribute less pollution to the city in their daily activities.

In the example above, the use of transition words and phrases work together to create a cohesive, logical, and persuasive paragraph. Each transition signals the relationship between ideas, making the argument easier to follow and build to a point.

The impact of transition words to the creation of strong, readable arguments can demonstrated by comparing an examples of a paragraph without transitions to a paragraph with transitions.

### Example 1 (without transitions):

The Calgary Stampede (the Stampede) is a time-honoured tradition. According to Foran (2008), it has evolved into a “cultural phenomenon” (p. ix), an event that evokes an emotional response. Some critics condemn the Stampede as a money-grabbing opportunity for local businesses and the tourism industry. Others see it as a community attraction that instills pride in citizens and creates a shared sense of history and purpose. The Stampede remains very popular for its diversity of activities: agricultural exhibits, sporting events, opening parade, and entertainment options.

### Example 2 (with transitions):

**Note:** The following transition words and phrases have been added to the paragraph:

1. Also
2. However
3. Whereas,
4. Moreover
5. Such as.

The Calgary Stampede (the Stampede) is a time-honoured tradition in Calgary. According to Foran (2008), it has **[1] also** evolved into a “cultural phenomenon” (p. ix), that is, an event that evokes an emotional response. **[2] However**, some critics condemn the Stampede as a money grabbing opportunity for local businesses and the tourism industry, **[3] whereas** others see it as a community event that instills pride in citizens and creates a shared sense of history and purpose. **[4] Moreover**, many Calgaryans agree the Stampede remains very popular for its diversity of activities, **[5] such as** agricultural exhibits, sporting events, opening parade, and entertainment options.

Consider the impact transitions made in the readability of the passages. In example 1, notice how the writing seems to be disjointed and abrupt because there are no transitions. On the other hand, the addition of transition words in example 2 creates a much smoother paragraph. Example 2 also demonstrates the impact of transitions on clarity of ideas. Because transitional words and phrases created connections, they can help guide readers to see the linkages between ideas in sentences. The impact of this is that the transition words help the writer to build their argument throughout the paragraph, rather than presenting the reader with a series of seemingly disconnected statements.

## Sentence-Level Transitions

Transitions are not only useful at the paragraph level. Rather, transitions can be used within sentences as well. The use of transition words and phrases within sentences can help create continuity, provide more information, link ideas, or give an example that demonstrates your point. The time when a transition is appropriate varies according to the intended meaning.

Below are some usages of transitions at the sentence level, accompanied by examples of the impact of adding transition words to sentences.

## 1. Emphasis

### Examples

**Without transition:**

She enjoys creating art and has a talent for sculpture.

**With transition:**

She enjoys creating art; moreover, she has a talent for sculpture.

**Impact:**

The first example sentence simply lists two facts about the subject. The addition of moreover in second example sentence emphasizes an area of particular strength, guiding the reader to see it as building on the first point.

## 2. Contrast

### Examples

**Without transition:**

Most people disagreed with the proposal, but it was enacted by the government.

**With transition:**

Most people disagreed with the proposal, but nevertheless it was enacted by the government.

**Impact:**

The addition of the transition word nevertheless signals a concession, showing that the government's actions were surprising in the face of opposition. draws attention to the unexpected result, making the contrast stronger.

## 3. Cause and Effect

### Examples

**Without transition:**

A foot of snow fell overnight. The school was closed the next day.

**With transition:**

A foot of snow fell overnight, consequently the school was closed for the next day.

**Impact:**

The addition of consequently clearly indicates that the school closure is the result of the snowfall. Without the transition word, the cause-and-effect connection is implied but is less direct.

## 4. Comparison

### Examples:

#### Without transition:

Ann's slideshow was engaging, and John's talk kept the audience interested.

#### With transition:

Ann's slideshow was engaging and John's talk, similarly, kept the audience interested.

#### Impact:

The addition of similarly draws a clear comparison between the positive impact the subjects' different skills, showing that both events created the effect of audience engagement.

Without the transition word, the comparison is weaker.

## 5. Time/Sequence

### Examples:

#### Without transition:

We did research and wrote an article.

#### With transition:

First, we did research, then we wrote an article.

#### Impact:

The version with transitions clearly outlines the order of actions. In the first example the order of events is implied but less clear.

## 7. Clarification/Restatement

### Examples:

#### Without transition:

She's a linguist, she studies languages for a living.

#### With transition:

She's a linguist, in other words, she studies languages for a living.

#### Impact:

The transitional phrase, in other words, indicates to the reader that the final clause is a clarification of the role of a linguist. Without the transition, the sentence could seem repetitive or unclear.

## Common Transitions

The charts below contain additional common transition words and phrases. Each chart is organized according to usage.

### To Introduce Additional Information:

additionally	as well as	also	next
as well	furthermore	and	finally
equally important	in addition	similarly	first, second, third
another	moreover	particularly	further

### To Provide Examples:

for example	to demonstrate	specifically	in particular
for instance	to illustrate	frequently	this can be seen
as an example	to explain further	such as	an effective demonstration of this

### To Show Time:

after	during	first	when
afterwards	earlier	last	later
as soon as	eventually	meanwhile	once
before	finally	next	until
soon	sometimes	since	concurrently

### To Show Location:

above	beneath	over	to the right
below	down	in front of	on top of
beside	beyond	further on	throughout
behind	between	near	at the corner of

**To Clarify:**

in other words	for instance	put another way	to demonstrate
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**To Show Linkages Between Ideas:**

accordingly	similarly	if	thus
as a result	consequently	otherwise	for this reason
because	unless	so	hence
therefore	more important	in the same way	additionally
nevertheless	however	conversely	yet
although	in contrast	nonetheless	on the contrary

**To Summarize and Conclude:**

in conclusion	thus	consequently	hence
in summary	to sum up	therefore	as a result
finally	to conclude	in brief	accordingly

**Activity: Identifying Transitions**

Can you identify all the transition words and phrases in the paragraph below?

Transitions are indispensable in writing, as they facilitate the smooth flow of ideas and enhance coherence within a piece of text. These linguistic bridges not only guide readers but also aid in understanding the logical progression of thoughts and arguments. Moreover, by effectively incorporating transitions, writers can establish logical connections between sentences, paragraphs, and sections, thus maintaining the reader's engagement and comprehension. Whether transitioning between contrasting ideas, providing examples, or emphasizing relationships, these transitional devices act as navigational tools, guiding readers through the intricate terrain of the writer's thoughts. Consequently, the thoughtful use of transitions strengthens writing by enhancing the readability of a text as well as contributing to its overall clarity and persuasiveness. This underscores the indispensable importance of transitions in proficient writing.

## Activity Key

How did you do on the activity? Use the key below to evaluate your identification of transitions.

The paragraph contains the following transition words and phrases:

1. as
2. not only
3. but also
4. Moreover
5. thus
6. Whether
7. Consequently
8. as well as

The paragraph below indicates the transition words and phrases in bold and accompanied with their corresponding number.

### Activity paragraph key:

Transitions are indispensable in writing, **[1] as** they facilitate the smooth flow of ideas and enhance coherence within a piece of text. These linguistic bridges **[2] not only** guide readers **[3] but also** aid in understanding the logical progression of thoughts and arguments. **[4] Moreover**, by effectively incorporating transitions, writers can establish logical connections between sentences, paragraphs, and sections, **[5] thus** maintaining the reader's engagement and comprehension. **[6] Whether** transitioning between contrasting ideas, providing examples, or emphasizing relationships, these transitional devices act as navigational tools, guiding readers through the intricate terrain of the writer's thoughts. **[7] Consequently**, the thoughtful use of transitions strengthens writing by enhancing the readability of a text **[8] as well as** contributing to its overall clarity and persuasiveness. This underscores the indispensable importance of transitions in proficient writing.