

Transitions

Transitions are important because they tie together concepts and contribute to the flow and readability of an essay. Transitions and organization are two different concepts, but they work together to create a strong essay structure. Organization relates to the order the information is presented, and transitions help readers make sense of how each piece of information relates to the next. Transitions can also show readers how to piece together the logic of an argument.

If feedback you've received states that your writing is hard to follow or that readers are not sure how one piece of information relates to another, you might need help with transitions.

Transitions Between Paragraphs

The key to creating a strong transition between paragraphs is to include one sentence that both refers to one topic and introduces a new one. This transition sentence can end one paragraph or begin the next. In the example below¹, the authors use the transition sentence to end one paragraph before moving on to the next one. The transition sentence is in **bold font**.

“...The most effective reading instruction for such diverse learners is a combination of whole-group instruction and individual instruction (Otto, 1991). **One method to equalize instruction for diverse learners is to supplement whole-class activities with a cognitive reading guide.**

The cognitive reading guide is an instructional tool that structures activities throughout reading with out diminishing the integrity of the literature. The included activities are designed to teach both process and content...”

In the first paragraph, the authors write about the best ways to support diverse learners' reading, and they end the paragraph introducing “the cognitive reading guide” as one way to support that reading. The audience doesn't know what a cognitive reading guide is, so the next paragraph begins by explaining it. You can see the clear logical progression between the previous topic and the next. Without the transition sentence, it would be

¹ This text comes from Giannuzzi, Michelle L, and Hudson, Floyd. “A Cognitive Reading Guide.” *Intervention in School and Clinic*, vol. 33, no. 3, 1998, pp. 169–181.

harder for the reader to understand how the two paragraphs (the two topics--reading instruction and a cognitive reading guide) relate to each other, and the movement from one paragraph to the next would feel choppy.

Transitions Within Paragraphs

Transitions within paragraphs are usually just words or phrases that help a reader figure out what to think about the information as they read it and to better understand how to relate different topics and ideas. The table below includes transitions writers can use within paragraphs. First, you will want to figure out why you need the transition. Are you comparing two ideas or details? Are you adding a new point? Are you trying to communicate a sequence of steps or events? In the table below, use the left column for common reasons a writing might need a transition. The right column includes transitional phrases one can use for each reason.

Common reasons to use transitions within a paragraph, and transitional phrases you might use.

Reason for a Transition	Transitional Phrases
To compare	however, but, instead, whereas, in comparison, although
To add	and, also, furthermore, in addition
To summarize	to summarize, as a whole, in conclusion, therefore
To indicate time or sequence	first (second, etc), after, before, during, currently, simultaneously, then
To signal the use of an example	for example, to display, to demonstrate, to illustrate, for instance
To repeat/emphasize	again, to emphasize this point, as mentioned above, as I have noted

The next table puts some of the transitional phrases into play, with example sentences.

Common reasons to use transitions within a paragraph, with examples.

Reason for a Transition	Examples
To compare	Winter in the Pacific Northwest was dark and wet, whereas winter days in the Sonoran Desert are mostly sunny and warm.

To add	I was persuaded by the author’s use of reliable sources. Moreover , I thought her writing style was funny and engaging.
To summarize	In conclusion , the HBO series Ted Lasso is a lighthearted take on the importance of character and dignity in today’s stressful, competitive world.
To indicate time or sequence	After recording plant height, we collected tissue samples from the topmost leaves.
To signal the use of an example	Even among English speaking countries, small differences in vocabulary might surprise you. For example, in Australia people refer to gasoline as petrol, sidewalks as footpaths, and elevators as lifts.
To repeat/emphasize	The aforementioned language differences are a delightful part of traveling.

Conclusion

Transitions, while sometimes small in form, are essential to writing strong, cohesive essays. They help to make it clear to your readers how your ideas are related, and they heighten the effect of your essay’s organization and structure. Use the examples and tables in this document to assist you, and don’t be afraid to experiment with different transitions to see which ones you think are most effective for a particular piece of writing!