

What are transitions? Transitions are words or phrases that help lead the reader from one idea to another. They act as signals that connect ideas and ensure that sentences and paragraphs flow together smoothly. Transitional words and phrases introduce examples, give directions, tell where the paragraph is going, and hold sentences together.

Why are transitions important? Transitions support the comprehension (meaning-making) process. Good writers place transitions at specific points to assist their readers; likewise, good readers recognize that transitional words are important for understanding the author's message.

Recognizing Transitions

- 1. Transitions separate supporting details.** Authors often use transitions to introduce major details and examples.
- 2. Transitions occur within 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.
- 3. Transitions occur between paragraphs.** If the author has done a good job of arranging paragraphs so the content of one leads to the next, a transition will point out 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.
- 4. Transitions are used between sections.** In longer works, the author may 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.

Sample Transition Words and Phrases

Add information to an idea:

As well as improving air quality by removing pollutants, plants also beautify.

Also
As well as
Along with
Besides
Equally important,

Furthermore
In addition
Indeed
In fact
In the same way,

Moreover
Not only
Second...Third...

Specific times or dates:

Over the last decade, there has been a peak in the number of students enrolling in community colleges over four-year institutions.

A year later...

For the past six months...

In 1901...

Sample Transition Words and Phrases

To extend an idea or indicate an example:

For example, to produce a change in velocity, either the speed or the direction is changed (or both).

Another	Of course	Specifically
For example	Other (summarize ideas from	To add to the difficulties
For instance	preceding paragraph or	To demonstrate
In particular	sentence)	To illustrate
Just as important as	Particularly	

Compare two things:

Vegetables can likewise add fiber to your diet.

Also	In similar fashion	Likewise
By the same token	In the same way	Not only
In comparison	Just as	Similarly
In like manner	Like	

Contrast two things:

Whereas urban areas can be overcrowded, rural areas have a low population density.

Alternatively	however...	On the other hand
Although	In contrast	Though
But	Instead	Unlike
Despite the..., many	It may be true that..., but....	Whereas
Even though	Nevertheless	Yet
However	Of course,..., but	
Ideally,	On the contrary	

To indicate a purpose or reason why:

In order to provide more resources, the government shifted funds to the education department.

For fear that	In order to	So that
In the hope that	So	With this in mind

Indicate a cause or reason:

The game was cancelled due to the forecast of heavy rain.

Accordingly	Due to	On account of
As	Consequently	Since
As a result	For	Therefore
Because	For the reason that	Thus
Because of	For this reason	

To indicate a result or an effect:

He's been studying very hard and consequently, his grades have improved.

As a result	Consequently	Therefore
Accordingly	Hence	Thus
Finally	So	

Emphasize a point:

Sample Transition Words and Phrases

Studying is surely a way to improve your grades.

Certainly	In fact	Surely to repeat
Especially	Obviously	Truly
Indeed	Of course	Undoubtedly

Indicate uncertainty:

There is no evidence for the existence of UFOs. Then again, there have been numerous reported sightings of UFOs.

Although	Nevertheless	While
Albeit	On the other hand	Yet
Be that as it may	Subsequently	
Conversely	Then again	

Indicate time, chronology, or sequence:

At the same time that Beethoven was composing brilliant musical compositions, Hayden was also writing brilliant pieces.

After	Before long...	First, ... Second, ...
As soon as	Currently	Formerly
At first	During	From then on
At the same time	Eventually	Immediately
Before	Finally	
Initially	Next	Subsequently
In the meantime	Previously	Up to the present time
In the past	Recently	While in
Lastly	Simultaneously	While at
Later	Since	
Meanwhile	Soon	

Conclude or summarize:

As can be seen, in the final analysis, the invention of electricity brought profound changes in our lives.

Again	In conclusion	
As can be seen in conclusion	In the final analysis	To put it briefly
All in all	Nevertheless	To sum up
Briefly	Of course	To summarize
Finally	On the whole	Therefore
Given these facts	Overall	Thus
Hence	So	To conclude
In brief	Summing up	

Further explanation and activities for Recognizing Transitions can be found in the following texts:

Flemming, Loraine. *Reading Keys*, 3rd ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2011. (See pages 108-110, 139, 207-208)

Flemming, Loraine. *Reading for Results*, 12th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014. (See pages 29-31, 168-169, 280-289, 531-532)

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Reading Across the Disciplines: College Reading and Beyond*, 5th ed. San Francisco: Pearson Education, 2012. (See pages 100-104, 134-135)