



Transitions

How transitions work

The goal in any writing is to convey information clearly. Transitions help you achieve this by establishing logical connections between sentences, paragraphs, and sections of your papers. Basically, transitions provide the reader with directions for how to piece together your ideas into a logically coherent argument. Transitions are not just verbal decorations that embellish your paper by making it read better. They are words with particular meanings that tell the reader how to think about your ideas. In providing the reader with these important cues, transitions help readers understand the logic of how your ideas fit together.

How you know you need to add transitions to your writing

- 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.

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 to help readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases.

Using transitional words and phrases for specific purposes

LOGICAL RELATIONSHIP	TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION
Similarity	also, in the same way, just as, likewise, similarly
Exception/Contrast	but, however, in spite of, on the one hand . . . on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet
Sequence/Order	first, second, third, . . . next, then, finally
Time	after, afterward, at last, before, currently, during, earlier, immediately, later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then
Example	for example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate
Emphasis	even, indeed, in fact, of course
Place/Position	above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, so, therefore, thus
Additional Support or Evidence	additionally, again, also, and, as well, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, then
Conclusion/Summary	finally, in brief, briefly, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in summary, to sum up