

TIP Sheet

TRANSITIONS

The burden of moving smoothly from one thought to another belongs to the writer. When you write, your reader should never have to go to the trouble of puzzling out hidden connections between ideas; those connections should be readily apparent. You can help your reader see at a glance that a certain train of thought is begun, developed, challenged, or completed by using word signals called *transitions*.

Good writers combine two transition techniques:

- Using transitional words and phrases (such as *however* or *moreover*) to make connections
- Using placement of ideas to make connections (especially in longer papers)

Transitional words and phrases

Transitions are words or phrases (*furthermore, for example, nevertheless, indeed*) that indicate how a statement in one sentence relates to a statement that precedes or follows. In the following example, the underlined transitions signal contrast:

In the winter of 1973-74 drivers lined up all over America to fill their gas tanks. But it was not merely a question of a fifteen-minute wait and back on the road again. On the contrary, cars often began to congregate at dawn.

Transition words are most effective when they are placed at the beginnings of sentences (although they can also be used in the middle or at the end). The transition below signals a shift to similarity:

Similarly, walkers appeared early on frigid mornings with an empty five-gallon can in one hand and a pint of steaming coffee in the other, determined to wait out the chill and avoid disappointment.

The next passage uses a cause-and-effect transition:

Everybody had to wait. As a result, high-school kids took Saturday morning jobs as gas line sitters; spouses drove their mates to work and spent the rest of the day in line, and libraries had a surge of activity as people decided to catch up on their reading while waiting.

In the final passage, this writer signals that she is summing up and concluding:

All in all, Americans were at their best during that bizarre season, abiding by the new rules as if a place in the gas line had been guaranteed to everyone by the Bill of Rights.

In the lists below you will find that some transitions can do double duty, signaling, for instance, either addition or amplification, depending on the context:

To *add* a thought or to *show sequence* in your own writing, use the following transitions:

again	equally important	in the first place	still
also	finally	last	then
and	first	moreover	
and then	furthermore	next	
besides	in addition	second	

To *amplify* or *intensify*:

and	also	furthermore	moreover
again	further	in addition	too
after all	even	indeed	truly
interestingly	it is true	of course	

To show *insistence*:

indeed	in fact	yes	no
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To *compare* or show *likeness*:

also	in the same way	likewise	similarly
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To show *concession*:

granted	it is true	of course	to be sure
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To show *contrast*:

although	despite	however	notwithstanding	still
and yet	even so	in contrast	on the contrary	though
at the same time	even though	in spite of	on the other hand	whereas

but	for all that	nevertheless	regardless	yet
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To give *examples*:

an illustration of	for instance	specifically
for example	in fact	to illustrate

To show a *restatement*:

that is	in other words	in simpler terms	to put it differently
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To show *cause and effect* or *consequence*:

accordingly	consequently	otherwise	therefore	to this end
as a result	for this purpose	since	thereupon	thus
because	hence	then	this	with this object

To show *time* or *place*:

above	below	formerly	near(by)	subsequently
adjacent to	earlier	here	opposite to	there
afterward	elsewhere	hitherto	simultaneously	this time
at the same time	farther on	later	so far	until now

To *repeat*, *summarize*, or *conclude*:

all in all	in brief	in particular	in summary	therefore
altogether	in conclusion	in short	on the whole	to put it differently

as has been said	in other words	in simpler terms	that is	to summarize
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Placement of ideas

Another strategy is to place older, previously stated ideas first, followed by newer, just-introduced ideas. This is effective in essay and research papers (generally in pieces longer than a single paragraph).

In the following example, the second paragraph recaps the information contained in the first paragraph before going on to introduce a new idea:

Interestingly, in A Canticle for Leibowitz it is institutional religion itself that leads the struggle against ignorance and superstition. The brothers of the Albertian Order of St. Leibowitz live their lives-and sometimes lay those lives down-for the preservation of those fragments of written human knowledge that have survived both the nuclear holocaust and the Great Simplification.

While for generations the church alone values these relics of knowledge, it is also, ironically, the church alone that recognizes (as the new generation of scholar-scientists does not) that knowledge will not redeem man, or make him better, or make him wiser. The secular scholar Thon Taddeo sees the monks as lacking understanding of that which they preserve and himself as a seeker after understanding; nevertheless, it is Abbott Paulo, not Taddeo, who points out that there is no conflict between true religion and Taddeo's "refrangible property of light." In other words, it is the church that most clearly understands both the value and the proper limits of human knowledge.

The above example combines this placement technique with transitions of emphasis, time, addition, contrast, and restatement; you, too, may use every trick in the book to lead your reader along the path of your thought.

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