

Transitional Words and Phrases

APSU Writing Center Handout

Transitional Words

Act as bridges between ideas, guiding readers smoothly from one point to the next and clarifying an author's logic.

Ensure you fully understand their meaning, so your writing flows naturally.

Overusing transitions can make writing feel forced or distracted from the main message.

Questions to Ask When Choosing Transitional Words

How does this idea relate to the previous one?

Does it support the same argument or present another viewpoint?

Are the two ideas dependent on each other?

What effect do you want to create for the reader?

Should one idea stand out more than the other?

We use transitional sentences to...

Show how one idea relates to another.

Help the audience follow the order of events.

Provide support and clarification to our ideas.

Reinforce the main idea before moving on to a new topic.

Transitions By Type

Coordinating Conjunctions: and, but, so.

Subordinating Conjunctions: because, if, when.

Conjunctive Adverbs: however, additionally, consequently.

Prepositions: despite, because of, in spite of.

Transitions By Function

Causation

Shows how one thing leads to another.

Causation words: because, therefore, thus, hence, as a result, consequently, accordingly.

- **Example:** I chose strong evidence **because** it supports my thesis directly.

Chronology

Shows the order in which events occur.

Chronology words: after, afterwards, during, earlier, following, immediately, in the meantime, later, next.

- **Example:** I revised the conclusion **following** my professor's feedback.

Addition / Combination

Links multiple elements to show they work together or add to a whole.

Combination words: also, besides, further, next, finally, second, additionally.

- **Example:** I drafted each paragraph and **finally** wrote a clear conclusion.

Contrast

Highlights differences between two ideas or elements.

Contrast words: although, but, despite, however, though, otherwise.

- **Example:** I wrote quickly **despite** being tired from studying all night.

Importance

Emphasizes what is most significant versus less critical.

Importance words: primarily, chiefly, mainly, foundationally.

- **Example:** I fixed typos, which were of less importance than strengthening my evidence.

Location

Shows where something is related to other elements.

Location words: above, below, beyond, here, nearby, there.

- **Example:** I'll discuss my research methods **here** before moving on to results.

Clarification

Restates or explains an idea for better understanding.

Clarification words: to explain, to clarify, that is, in other words.

- **Example:** I used three sources in my essay **to explain** the issue from multiple perspectives.

Concession

Acknowledges an opposing viewpoint or limitation while showing your understanding.

Concession words: naturally, granted, of course.

- **Example:** **Of course**, you should cite all your sources to avoid plagiarism.

Conclusion

Signals a summary or closing statement.

Conclusion words: finally, lastly, in conclusion, in the end, to conclude.

- **Example: In conclusion**, strong evidence and clear organization make an essay persuasive.

References

GMU Writing Center. (2024). *Transitions*. George Mason University.

<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/general-writing-practices/transitions>

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