

## Using Transitions

One of the keys to good writing is the effective use of *transition* between sentences and paragraphs. The importance of using connectors between sentences and paragraphs cannot be overemphasized; in order for a body paragraph to do its part in the paper, it must connect smoothly with the parts around it. An essay can fall apart unless the paragraphs are firmly linked together. Transitional devices have one purpose: to help the reader follow the main line of thought. The two major types of transition are *standard devices* and *paragraph hooks*.

The *standard devices* are specific words and phrases that lead the reader through an argument. They indicate important logical relationships between sentences and/or ideas:

Admittedly	In addition	On the other hand
And, But	In fact	Still
Assuredly	Indeed	The fact remains
Certainly	It is true that	Therefore
Clearly...then	Moreover	Thus
Consequently	Nevertheless	To be sure
Even so	No doubt	True
Furthermore	Nobody denies	Undoubtedly
Granted	Obviously	Unquestionably
However	Of course	Yet

*Paragraph hooks* are both stronger and more sophisticated than standard devices. A paragraph hook consists of the repetition of a key word or idea from the last sentence of one paragraph in the first sentence of the next idea. *The best papers use both types of transition for variety*. Obviously, in order for transitions to be effective, every paragraph needs a strong topic sentence and a concluding sentence. A brief example of a *paragraph hook* is given below.

The game of baseball, although familiar to many and popular throughout the world, is actually more sophisticated than the average enthusiast would think. If one were to study the game more closely, for example with the guidance of an insider such as a coach or a professional player, he would probably be surprised to learn of the various complexities involved in playing America's national pastime.

The complexities in the game of baseball can easily be demonstrated first by surveying coaching strategies and tactics...

The main idea of the first paragraph tells us that baseball is more complicated than most people think. The key word used to capture this concept is *complexities*. (Baseball is complex.) The same key word (complexities) is repeated in the first sentence of the second paragraph, giving us a smooth transition from one paragraph to the next and "setting the stage" for the contents of the second paragraph.

Choose this hook carefully, however. Not just any word will do. It should reflect the topic you want to develop in your second paragraph and should not merely repeat what is said in the paragraph that comes before.

## Writing Transitions (from Owl Purdue)

Good transitions can connect paragraphs and turn disconnected writing into a unified whole. Instead of treating paragraphs as separate ideas, transitions can help readers understand how paragraphs work together, reference one another, and build to a larger point. The key to producing good transitions is highlighting connections between corresponding paragraphs. By referencing in one paragraph the relevant material from previous paragraphs, writers can develop important points for their readers.

It is a good idea to continue one paragraph where another leaves off. (Instances where this is especially challenging may suggest that the paragraphs don't belong together at all.) Picking up key phrases from the previous paragraph and highlighting them in the next can create an obvious progression for readers. Many times, it only takes a few words to draw these connections. Instead of writing transitions that could connect any paragraph to any other paragraph, write a transition that could only connect one specific paragraph to another specific paragraph.

**Example:** Overall, Management Systems International has logged increased sales in every sector, leading to a significant rise in third-quarter profits.

Another important thing to note is that the corporation had expanded its international influence.

**Revision:** Overall, Management Systems International has logged increased sales in every sector, leading to a significant rise in third-quarter profits.

These impressive profits are largely due to the corporation's expanded international influence.

**Example:** Fearing for the loss of Danish lands, Christian IV signed the Treaty of Lubeck, effectively ending the Danish phase of the 30 Years War.

But then something else significant happened. The Swedish intervention began.

**Revision:** Fearing for the loss of more Danish lands, Christian IV signed the Treaty of Lubeck, effectively ending the Danish phase of the 30 Years War.

Shortly after Danish forces withdrew, the Swedish intervention began.

**Example:** Amy Tan became a famous author after her novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, skyrocketed up the bestseller list.

There are other things to note about Tan as well. Amy Tan also participates in the satirical garage band the Rock Bottom Remainers with Stephen King and Dave Barry.

**Revision:** Amy Tan became a famous author after her novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, skyrocketed up the bestseller list.

Though her fiction is well known, her work with the satirical garage band the Rock Bottom Remainers receives far less publicity.

## Transitional Devices

Transitional devices are like bridges between parts of your paper. They are cues that help the reader to interpret ideas a paper develops. Transitional devices are words or phrases that help carry a thought from one sentence to another, from one idea to another, or from one paragraph to another. And finally, transitional devices link sentences and paragraphs together smoothly so that there are no abrupt jumps or breaks between ideas.

There are several types of transitional devices, and each category leads readers to make certain connections or assumptions. Some lead readers forward and imply the building of an idea or

thought, while others make readers compare ideas or draw conclusions from the preceding thoughts. Here is a list of some common transitional devices that can be used to cue readers in a given way.

**To Add:**

and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further, furthermore, nor, too, next, lastly, what's more, moreover, in addition, first (second, etc.)

**To Compare:**

whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, by comparison, where, compared to, up against, balanced against, vis a vis, but, although, conversely, meanwhile, after all, in contrast, although this may be true

**To Prove:**

because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is

**To Show Exception:**

yet, still, however, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, of course, once in a while, sometimes

**To Show Time:**

immediately, thereafter, soon, after a few hours, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first (second, etc.), next, and then

**To Repeat:**

in brief, as I have said, as I have noted, as has been noted

**To Emphasize:**

definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly, always, forever, perennially, eternally, never, emphatically, unquestionably, without a doubt, certainly, undeniably, without reservation

**To Show Sequence:**

first, second, third, and so forth. A, B, C, and so forth. next, then, following this, at this time, now, at this point, after, afterward, subsequently, finally, consequently, previously, before this, simultaneously, concurrently, thus, therefore, hence, next, and then, soon

**To Give an Example:**

for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate, as an illustration, to illustrate

**To Summarize or Conclude:**

in brief, on the whole, summing up, to conclude, in conclusion, as I have shown, as I have said, hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, as a result, consequently