

Common Transition Words and Phrases

Transitions clarify the logic of your argument by orienting your reader as you develop ideas between sentences and paragraphs. These tools should alert readers to shifts in your argument while also maintain the smoothness and clarity of your prose. Below, you'll find some of the most commonly used transition categories and examples of each. Depending on the example, these suggestions may be within sentences or at the beginning of sentences.

1. **Addition:** use when presenting multiple ideas that flow in the same direction, under the same heading/ idea
also, another, finally, first, first of all, for one thing, furthermore, in addition, last of all, likewise, moreover, next, and, second, the third reason
2. **Sequence/ Order:** use to suggest a temporal relationship between ideas; places evidence in sequence
first, second (etc.), next, last, finally, first of all, concurrently, immediately, prior to, then, at that time, at this point, previously, subsequently, and then, at this time, thereafter, previously, soon, before, after, followed by, after that, next, before, after, meanwhile, formerly, finally, during
3. **Contrast:** use to demonstrate differences between ideas or change in argument direction
but, however, in contrast, on the other hand, on the contrary, yet, differ, difference, balanced against, differing from, variation, still, on the contrary, unlike, conversely, otherwise, on the other hand, however
4. **Exception:** use to introduce an opposing idea
however, whereas, on the other hand, while, instead, in spite of, yet, despite, still, nevertheless, even though, in contrast, but, but one could also say...
5. **Comparison:** use to demonstrate similarities between ideas that may not be under the same subject heading or within the same paragraph
like, likewise, just, in a different way / sense, whereas, like, equally, in like manner, by comparison, similar to, in the same way, alike, similarity, similarly, just as, as in a similar fashion, conversely
6. **Illustration:** use to develop or clarify an idea, to introduce examples, or to show that the second idea is subordinate to the first
for example, to illustrate, on this occasion, this can be seen, in this case, specifically, once, to illustrate, when/where, for instance, such as, to demonstrate, take the case of, in this case
7. **Location:** use to show spatial relations
next to, above, below, beneath, left, right, behind, in front, on top, within
8. **Cause and Effect:** use to show that one idea causes, or results from, the idea that follows or precedes it.
because, therefore, so that, cause, reason, effect, thus, consequently, since, as a result, if...then, result in
9. **Emphasis:** use to suggest that an idea is particularly important to your argument
important to note, most of all, a significant factor, a primary concern, a key feature, remember that, pay particular attention to, a central issue, the most substantial issue, the main value, a major event, the chief factor, a distinctive quality, especially valuable, the chief outcome, a vital force, especially relevant, most noteworthy, the principal item, above all, should be noted
10. **Summary or Conclusion:** use to signal that what follows is summarizing or concluding the previous ideas; in humanities papers, use these phrases sparingly.
to summarize, in short, in brief, in sum, in summary, to sum up, in conclusion, to conclude, finally

Some material adapted from Cal Poly Pomona College Reading Skills Program: www.csupomona.edu/lrc/crsp/handouts/recognizing_words.html and "Power Tools for Technical Communication." www.io.com/~hcexres/power_tools/transitions.html

Writing Effective Sentence Transitions (Advanced)

Transitions are the rhetorical tools that clarify the logic of your argument by orienting your reader as you develop ideas between sentences and paragraphs. The ability to integrate sentence transitions into your prose, rather than simply throwing in overt transition signals like “in addition,” indicates your mastery of the material. (Note: The visibility of transitions may vary by discipline; consult with your professor to get a better sense of discipline or assignment specific expectations.)

Transition Signals: Transition signals are words or phrases that indicate the logic connecting sets of information or ideas.

Signals like *therefore*, *on the other hand*, *for example*, *because*, *then*, and *afterwards* can be good transition tools at the sentence and paragraph level. When using these signals, be conscious of the real meaning of these terms; they should reflect the actual relationship between ideas (see handout titled, **Common Transition Words and Phrases** for more specific examples).

Review Words: Review words are transition tools that link groups of sentences or whole paragraphs. They condense preceding discussion into a brief word or phrase.

For example: You’ve just completed a detailed discussion about the greenhouse effect. To transition to the next topic, you could use review words like “*this heat-trapping process*” to refer back to the green house effect discussion. The relative ability to determine a cogent set of review words might signal your own understanding of your work; think of review words as super-short summaries of key ideas.

Preview words (overview): Preview words condense an upcoming discussion into a brief word or phrase.

For example: You’ve just explained how heat is trapped in the earth’s atmosphere. Transitioning to the theory that humans are adding to that effect, you could use preview words like “*sources of additional CO₂ in the atmosphere include*” to point forward to that discussion.

Transition Sentences: The strongest and most sophisticated tools, transition sentences indicate the connection between the preceding and upcoming pieces of your argument. They often contain one or more of the above transition tools.

For example: You’ve just discussed how much CO₂ humans have added to the atmosphere. You need to transition to a discussion of the effects. A strong set of transition sentences between the two sections might sound like this:

“These large amounts of CO₂ added to the atmosphere may lead to a number of disastrous consequences for residents of planet earth. The rise in global temperature that accompanies the extra CO₂ can yield effects as varied as glacial melting and species extinction.”

In the first sentence, the **review words** are “These large amounts of CO₂ added to the atmosphere”; the **preview words** are “number of disastrous consequences”; the **transition signals** are “may lead to.” The topic sentence of the next paragraph indicates the specific “disastrous consequences” you will discuss.

REMEMBER: If you don’t see a way to write a logical, effective transition between sentences, ideas or paragraphs, this might indicate organizational problems in your essay; you might consider revising your work.

Some material adapted from Cal Poly Pomona College Reading Skills Program:
http://www.csupomona.edu/lrc/crsp/handouts/recognizing_words.html; and
 “Power Tools for Technical Communication.”
http://www.io.com/~hcexres/power_tools/transitions.html