



TRANSITIONS: THE GEAR SHIFT OF WRITING

Imagine that sitting down to write a paper is like getting into a car. You are embarking on a journey from your introduction to your conclusion. In order to smoothly navigate through the various twists and turns of ideas and information in the paper, you will need to shift gears smoothly from one idea to another. Transition words and phrases allow you to shift from thought to thought in your writing without grinding gears or giving the reader whiplash. When different ideas are presented in a paper without any connecting transitions, the writing becomes choppy and does not flow.

In addition to connecting ideas smoothly, transitions also help to order ideas and information in a specific order, just as the numbers on your gears set a pattern for your acceleration or deceleration on the road. Transitions provide readers with directions for how to follow your ideas in a logical manner.

The chart below lists words and phrases that can serve as transitions.

Sequence/Order	first of all in the first place meanwhile again then	in addition furthermore eventually finally at the same time	also afterwards formerly next second, third. etc.
Example	for example specifically	to illustrate namely	for instance in particular
Emphasis	indeed after all	in fact certainly	of course truly
Similarity	similarly likewise	just as also	in comparison in the same way
Contrast/ Change of Direction	otherwise however despite yet	even though regardless on the contrary on the other hand	nevertheless nonetheless in contrast instead unlike
Cause & Effect	therefore consequently thus	hence for this purpose as a result	for this reason otherwise as a consequence

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Time	after as soon as during in the past meanwhile shortly subsequently	afterward before earlier later now simultaneously then	at last currently immediately lately presently recently
Conclusion/ Summary	finally in brief as a result to conclude	in short in conclusion in summary	thus in other words therefore

Punctuation note:

It is important to remember that when you use transition words and phrases in your writing, that they generally need to be followed by a comma.

Example 1:

Instead of running for cover, Harry and Marla continued their picnic lunch in the passing rain shower.

Example 2:

Harry's sandwich was soggy; therefore, he only ate the salami but not the bread.

The Importance of Organization

The clarity and effectiveness of your transitions will depend greatly upon how well you have organized your paper. You may want to evaluate the overall organization of your ideas before you begin to work on transitions.

Strong organization of a paper includes two elements:

- a logical, sequential presentation of ideas or points in your discussion or argument, and
- logical relationships created between the parts of your paper.

Transitions cannot substitute for good, overall organization; however, they can make this organization clearer and easier to follow.