



The Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Transitions: Building Bridges Between Ideas

Effective paragraphs generally focus on one main idea fully and completely. As such, two paragraphs next to each other in a paper might not have much in common, which can make for a difficult segue for the reader. In order to assist the reader in understanding how the two ideas link, writers need to use effective transitions.

Practical Suggestions

Anticipate Expectations

Read the last sentence of each of your paragraphs. Ask yourself, “What does my reader expect to hear next?” If your next paragraph does not meet those expectations, it is probably time to look at the way you have organized your paper and the transition between your ideas.

State Connections

When checking your paper for clear transitions, don’t assume that your reader knows what you know. You need to write out and explain what may seem like an obvious connection for you.

Hear the Transitions

Make sure the transitions belong where you place them. Reading the transitional sentence out loud along with the surrounding sentences is good way to know if they fit correctly.

Use Repetition

If you get stuck on how to write a transition, try repeating an idea from the last sentence of your previous paragraph in the first sentence of the following paragraph. If you think the repetition feels redundant, try using a synonym for a key noun or verb.

Use Transition Words

Transition words are often an effective way to connect paragraphs. However, do not assume that just because you use one of these words, you have an effective transition. Remember, the idea is what makes a transition, not simply using a word like “furthermore.” Also, be cautious not to begin every paragraph with one of these words.

The following lists of transitional words and phrases can be a useful tool when constructing your bridges.

Addition	
again	too
and then	first, second, etc.
also	last
in addition	finally
furthermore	next

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

Time	
while	soon
after	thereafter
never	formerly
whenever	previously

Compare/Contrast	
but	on the other hand
yet	on the contrary
however	compared to
similarly	at the same time
in contrast	although
likewise	conversely

Exemplification	
for example	in this case
for instance	to demonstrate
specifically	to illustrate

Prove	
because	for the same reason
since	besides
evidently	indeed
furthermore	in fact
moreover	that is

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

Clarification	
to explain	that is to say
to clarify	to put it another way
to rephrase	in other words

Emphasize	
definitely	naturally
extremely	surprisingly
obviously	undeniably
in fact	without a doubt

Summary/Conclusion	
in brief	accordingly
to conclude	to sum up
in conclusion	to summarize
as I have said	as a result
finally	in short

Show Sequence	
first, second	at this time
concurrently	next
and then	finally
before this	afterward
thus	hence
then	simultaneously

Cause/Effect	
because	therefore
since	thus
on account of	hence