

## Transitional Words and Phrases

**Transitions provide signposts for your reader, creating directionality within the paper. Transitional words and phrases prepare the reader for what is to come or serve to connect new information to what has already been written.**

Have you ever read the draft of your paper and noticed that your sentences and paragraphs needed better connections to fit together? Paying attention to transitional words and phrases can make a noticeable difference in the fluency and clarity of your writing. These connectors in your phrasing and sentence structure guide the reader through the paper and allow for better flow and organization in your writing style.

As you draft and then revise your writing assignment, first confirm the main objective of the paragraph or section you are writing in light of the overall goal of the paper under construction. For example, determine your primary objective from the assignment instructions and ask if you are *comparing/contrasting*, *arguing a position or stance*, *establishing cause and effect relationships*, or *defining and describing*. Identifying your purpose will assist in determining the types of transitional words or phrases that are the most effective for your writing objective. Next, define and establish the direction you are trying to lead your readers: *adding to information presented*, *showing time or amount*, *presenting results*, or *sharing a conclusion*.

In their book *The Elements of Style*, Strunk and White (2009) discuss the effective use of transitional words, phrases, and sentences. They suggest the following:

As a rule, begin each paragraph either with a sentence that suggests the topic or with a sentence that helps the transition. If a paragraph forms part of a larger composition, its relation to what precedes, or its function as a part of the whole, may need to be expressed. This can sometimes be done by a mere word or phrase (again, therefore, for the same reason) in the first sentence. Sometimes, however, it is expedient to get into the topic slowly, by way of a sentence or two of introduction or transition (pp. 16-17).

### Directional Transitions

The following suggested words and phrases can be used as directional resources to help with your writing creativity and productivity when drafting transitions. This is not an exhaustive list, so use a thesaurus and dictionary to choose the proper word or phrase.

### Summarizing and/or Concluding

Finally, in brief, in a word, to that end, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in summation, in sum, in summary, hence, therefore, for this reason, consequently, to finish up, in finality, to the point, as a final point, at last

*Example: In conclusion, Jesus Christ is the Savior to all mankind.*

### Adding Further Information

Likewise, similarly, in like manner, in the same way, also, and, as well, furthermore, moreover, in addition to, equally speaking, correspondingly, besides, more to the point, equally, into the bargain, what is more

*Example: Moreover, every person is born with a sin nature, which insinuates a need for Jesus Christ, the Savior of humankind.*



### Comparing Ideas

In like manner, in the same way, likewise, in the same way, equally speaking, similarly, correspondingly, in the same way, equally, also, in addition to, as well, besides

*Example: In the same way, it is fair to say that God is the Creator of the earth.*

### Concession of a Point

Agreed, certainly, granted, obviously, of course, to be sure, undoubtedly, surely, definitely, positively, unquestionably, optimistically, confidently speaking, indisputably

*Example: Undoubtedly, the Bible is the Word of God.*

### Sequence/Order (best used as clusters/groups)

(a) first, second, third,... (avoid *firstly*, *secondly*, *thirdly*,...); (b) first, next, last; (c) in the beginning, toward the middle, at the end; (d) one, also, in addition to; (e) initially, after that, finally; (f) at first, subsequently, to conclude

*Example: Initially, I was a sinner. After that, I recognized my sinful condition. Finally, I received Jesus Christ as my Savior.*

### Time and Order

Afterward, before, currently, eventually, finally, immediately, in the future, in the past, later, meanwhile, for now, for the time being, instantly, right away, straight away, at some point, one day, for the moment, previous to, earlier than, at present, in the end, in due course, in the long run

*Example: In due course, all people will stand before Jesus Christ and account for the lives they lived.*

### Providing Examples

For example, a working example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate, to demonstrate, case in point, to lay bare, in particular, particularly, for the most part, on the whole, essentially, proof positive

*Example: Christians, for example, are examined by the spiritual fruit that they bear in their lives.*

### Exception and Contrast

In spite of, on the other hand, notwithstanding, nonetheless, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet, quite the opposite, on the contrary, still, yet, despite, regardless of, in the face of, in light of, in view of, taking into consideration, with regards to, given that

*Example: Regardless of what some may believe, Jesus is the only way to Heaven.*

### Position/Placement

Above, adjacent to, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there, between herein, upon which, beside, since, through, throughout, toward, before, beforehand, during, outside, in this, in the direction of, headed for, to this end

*Example: Throughout history many have given their lives for the cause of Christ; to this end, these martyrs will receive a special crown of glory in Heaven.*



### Placing Emphasis/Stressing Importance

Even, in fact, in actuality, in effect, in reality, to all intent and purposes, as a matter of fact, in point of fact, in truth, as it happens, in actual fact, if truth be told, in consequence

*Example: If truth be told, the Bible is one of the greatest gifts to humankind.*

### Following a Prior Idea

Consequently, thereby, by this means, therefore, as a result, for this reason, so, thus, accordingly, hence, hence forth, and so

*Example: For this reason, I declare that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.*

### Punctuation of Transitional Words and Phrases

Proper punctuation should be used when utilizing transitional words and phrases. The following tips will help; however, this is not a comprehensive list, and other grammatical sources should be consulted to ensure accuracy and appropriateness of punctuation usage.

#### Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or clause.

*Example: As it happens, I have made a new friend.*

#### Use a comma before and after a parenthetical expression.

A parenthetical expression consists of a word or modifying phrase within a sentence that “interrupts” the flow of the sentence to give details or clarify a statement. These words may also be structured as part of the main sentence and would not be treated as parenthetical; therefore, no commas would be needed.

*Examples: (Part of a sentence) The snow storm was indeed a bad one.*

*(Parenthetical expression) I have, on the contrary, experienced worse snow storms than the one we just encountered.*

#### Place a semicolon between independent clauses that are joined by transitional words.

Notably, these words are followed by a comma if they cause a distinct break in the flow of the sentence; but if the word seems closely connected to the following clause, not requiring a pause, the comma may be omitted.

*Example: I learned new things; as a result, I will remain in college.*

#### Place commas after connectives.

Transitional expressions that function as connectives (*for example*, *for instance*, *that is*, *however*, and *namely*) are always followed by commas.

*Example: I am looking at options in Europe for studying abroad; for example, I applied to a summer art intensive in Paris, a fashion design program in Milan, and a graphic design course in London.*

### References

Kierzek, J. M., & Gibson, W. (1977). *The Macmillan handbook of English* (R. Wilson, Jr., Ed.; 6th ed.). Macmillan Publishing.

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E.B. (2000). *The elements of style* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson Education.