

Transitions: Building Bridges between Ideas



Imagine two concrete, information packed paragraphs sitting on opposite sides of waterfall. The easiest way to get to the second paragraph is by going straight across the rushing water. You, as a writer, are challenged to guide your reader from one sentence to the other without losing them to treacherous rapids. You will need to create a well-built bridge that they can follow to the next idea. In effective writing, bridges are referred to as transitions.

Transitions are links between ideas, sentences and paragraphs. They help your reader move easily from one thought to the next as

well as ensure that they stay interested in your topic. Remember, bridge building takes practice and it may take a couple of tries to figure out the type of bridge that works best for connecting your ideas.

1. Practical Suggestions:

- Read the last sentence 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 transitions between your ideas.
- 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.
- Make sure the transitions belong where you place them. Reading the transitional sentence along with the surrounding sentences out loud is good way to know if they fit snugly in place.
- 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.

2. Resources/More Information:

- <http://webster.comnet.edu/grammar/transitions.htm>
- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_transition.html
- <http://www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/maplewoods/writeplace/transitions.html>

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

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

Time	
while	soon
after	thereafter
never	later
always	previously
whenever	formerly

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

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

Emphasize	
definitely	naturally
extremely	surprisingly
obviously	never
in fact	without a doubt
absolutely	undeniably

Show Sequence	
first, second, etc.	concurrently
A,B,C, etc.	thus
next	hence
then	afterward
following this	before this
at this time	and then
finally	simultaneously

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

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

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

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

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

Cause/Effect	
because	therefore
since	thus
on account of	hence
for that reason	as a result
therefore	accordingly