Transitions

Def.: A word, phrase, or passage that links one subject or idea to another in speech or writing.

Transitions guide the reader through the writer’s thought process. Without transitions, a reader may feel he’s on a bumpy ride with leaps of thoughts and sharp turns. Transitions help to bridge ideas, point out detours, and make the ride a smoother one for the reader. There are many types of transitions and each is suitable for different types of connections, therefore, the writer should use transitions that fit the type of information being transitioned.

Here is an example of how a text reads without transition words:

Barak Obama became the first man of African-American descent to be elected as president. Republicans and Democrats alike were expressing admiration for the historical significance of the election results. Ralph Nader, who had also made a run for the presidency, made a comment during a radio interview that caused many people to take pause.

As you can see, the ideas presented in the text seem choppy and disjointed. The addition of a few simple transitions makes a big difference:

On November 4, 2008, Barak Obama became the first man of African-American descent to be elected as president. That night, Republicans and Democrats alike were expressing admiration for the historical significance of the election results. However, Ralph Nader, who had also made a run for the presidency, made a comment during a radio interview that caused many people to take pause.

Transitions are not always single words or short phrases shown in the previous example. Sometimes you will need to write a sentence that shows how two ideas are connected. For example:

— During the Antebellum period, women in America were not allowed to speak out publicly about issues of the day or run for public office.

— Harriet Beecher Stowe directly influenced the abolitionist movement.

These are contradictory ideas and a transitional sentence is needed to help the reader understand the writer’s thought process:

During the Antebellum period, women in America were not allowed to speak out publicly about issues of the day or run for public office. However, Harriet Beecher Stowe was able to circumvent that obstacle by using her ability to write. She used this skill as a tool to directly influence the abolitionist movement.

The following list can be used to help you implement transitions into your writing. Be sure you understand how each transitional word should be used. Its meaning must fit the type of information being transitioned.

→ Transitions to add more information:

- additionally
- again
- also
- and
- as well
- besides
- equally important
- for example (e.g.)
- for instance
- furthermore
- in addition
- in fact
- indeed
- likewise
- moreover
- once more
- similarly
- that is (i.e.)
- then, too
### Transitions to show that something was expected:
- as a matter of fact
- certainly
- doubtless
- for that matter
- it follows that
- naturally
- obviously
- of course
- surely
- to be sure

### Transitions to show other measures of certainty
- anyhow
- anyway
- doubtless
- in all likelihood
- in all probability
- perhaps
- possibly
- probably

### Transitions to show exceptions or contrasts
- but
- however
- in spite of
- on one hand
- nonetheless
- on the contrary
- on the other hand
- notwithstanding
- still
- yet

### Transitions that show sequence, time, or order
- after
- all of a sudden
- as soon as
- at the present time
- at the same time
- at this instant
- before
- finally
- first
- from time to time
- in a moment
- in due time
- in the first place
- in the meantime
- last
- later
- next
- now
- once
- second
- simultaneously
- since
- sooner or later
- then
- third
- to begin with
- until
- until now
- up to the present time
- when
- without delay

### Transitions to introduce examples:
- for example
- for instance
- namely
- specifically
- to illustrate

### Transitions that emphasis a point
- even
- indeed
- in fact
- of course
- truly

### Transitions that indicate place or position
- above
- adjacent
- below
- beyond
- here
- in front
- in back
- nearby
- there

### Transitions that indicate cause and effect
- accordingly
- consequently
- hence
- so
- therefore
- thus

### Transitions that introduce support or evidence
- additionally
- and
- as well
- besides
- equally important
- further
- furthermore
- in addition
- moreover
- therefore