

Transitions

If you feel your paper has trouble with “flow” or “organization,” if your paper seems “choppy” or like it “jumps around,” then there is a good chance that you need to work on transitions.

Transitions and signaling words are the words and phrases you use to tell your reader how they are supposed to connect one idea with another. Without them, a reader has to guess how your ideas are connected.

You can't assume your reader is going to have the same conclusions you do, so as a writer you need to make it clear why one idea is connected to another by using transitions and signaling words. These words and phrases connect ideas within a sentence or paragraph and also between paragraphs.

The chart below includes transitions and the connections they represent. Some words can be used to show many kinds of relationships, and this list is not comprehensive.

Relationship between Ideas	Transitions
Similar Idea	Also, just as, besides, similarly, likewise, furthermore, moreover
Contrast	However, instead, in contrast, conversely
Sequence/Timing	First, second, third, . . . , next, then, finally, before, after, later, at the same time, recently, meanwhile, immediately, subsequently
Position	Above, below, before, afterwards, here, there, adjacent, beyond
Exception	Besides, however, except, nonetheless, excluding, outside of, save, barring
Emphasis	Of course, even, truly, in fact
Example	For example, such as, specifically, namely
Additional Evidence	And, also, again, as well, additionally, in addition, furthermore
Cause and Effect	Because, so, therefore, thus, as a result, accordingly, consequently, hence
Summary/Conclusion	Finally, in conclusion, in short, ultimately, thus, after all, on the whole, all things considered, in sum,

Transitions and Signaling Words within a Paragraph

Using transitions within paragraphs helps you move the reader smoothly from one idea to another. Look at this paragraph that is choppy because of the lack of transitions:

There are many benefits to living in the dorm. It can be very convenient to be so close to campus. It is nice to be able to stop at the dining center for food. There are reasons for wanting to live off-campus. You can have a lot more privacy when you have your own apartment. Living off-campus gives you the opportunity to show more responsibility. Deciding whether to live on- or off-campus requires you to choose what is most important to you.

The previous paragraph is choppy, but by adding a few transitions and signaling words it can be smoothed out.

There are many benefits to living in the dorm. It can be very convenient to be so close to campus, **and** it is nice to be able to stop at the dining center for food. **However**, there are reasons for wanting to live off-campus. You can have a lot more privacy when you have your own apartment. **Additionally**, living off-campus gives you the opportunity to show more responsibility. **Ultimately**, deciding whether to live on- or off-campus requires you to choose what is most important to you.

Transitions and Signaling Words between Paragraphs

Transitions show readers connections between the ideas in different paragraphs. One way to use transitions between paragraphs is to include signaling words in the opening sentences of your paragraphs. A few examples are:

The **next** step in making an apple pie is making the crust.
Picking the right baseball team is **also** important.
In comparison, the sequel is not as good.

Signaling words give the reader an idea of how the new paragraph relates to the previous one, but these transitions are not the only way to demonstrate connections. The following example shows the last sentence of one paragraph and the first of another from an essay about owning pets:

The pets make sure that we remain well aware of their control of the house.
My family's allergies are continually acting up.

Right now, it's difficult to tell why the writer goes from talking about pets running the house to allergies. The direct connection between the two ideas is not being shown. By revising the second sentence to include a reference to the first it is possible to show why the ideas are related:

The pets make sure that we remain well aware of their control of the house.
Another way our pets show they are in charge is by causing my family's allergies to continually act up.

Because the opening sentence of the second paragraph includes the main idea of the first, the writer is able to explicitly show his readers why he feels the ideas are related. Another example is:

This phenomenon results in frequent and heavy rainstorms.
Rainforests are lush and green.

This phenomenon results in frequent and heavy rainstorms.
As a result of these frequent storms, rainforests are lush and green.

Always remember to ask yourself why you are putting paragraphs ideas in a certain order and what the connections between them are. Then look for ways you can show those connections to your readers.