

## TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

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Transitional words and phrases are also called signal words. They are placed at key points in sentences and paragraphs to lead readers through your ideas. Using transitional words will help you more clearly express your thoughts and the relationships between your ideas, which will help you communicate more effectively with your audience.

When writers connect sentences and paragraphs using transitions, they provide a sense of movement that allows their readers to follow the connections between main and subordinate ideas. As a result, it is easier for readers to understand the writer's purpose and message.

Play around with the transitional words you use! Try out phrases you have never used before and use a variety of different transitional words—avoid repeating the same transitions over and over again.

The following are lists of different words that can help to indicate particular relationships between ideas. These words are not all synonyms, though, meaning that all the words in a particular list cannot necessarily be used interchangeably. Think about which words fit your intended message the best and use those. Look up words you don't know in the dictionary to see if they fit your intended meanings.

To indicate **TIME ORDER**:

- ◆ in the past
- ◆ in retrospect
- ◆ earlier
- ◆ heretofore
- ◆ previously
- ◆ preceding
- ◆ former
- ◆ formerly
- ◆ prior to
- ◆ yesterday
- ◆ of late
- ◆ recently
- ◆ not long ago
- ◆ at present
- ◆ presently
- ◆ currently
- ◆ right away
- ◆ now
- ◆ by now
- ◆ until now
- ◆ immediately
- ◆ simultaneously
- ◆ at the same time
- ◆ at this moment
- ◆ concurrently
- ◆ in the future
- ◆ henceforth
- ◆ hereafter
- ◆ afterward
- ◆ after a short time
- ◆ after a while
- ◆ after a long time
- ◆ soon after
- ◆ thereafter
- ◆ right after
- ◆ not long ago
- ◆ later on

To indicate **CONTRAST**:

- ◆ however
- ◆ but
- ◆ and yet
- ◆ although
- ◆ even though
- ◆ contrary to
- ◆ counter to
- ◆ on the contrary
- ◆ contrarily
- ◆ conversely
- ◆ in contrast
- ◆ otherwise
- ◆ despite
- ◆ on the other hand
- ◆ nevertheless
- ◆ nonetheless
- ◆ to differ from
- ◆ to differentiate
- ◆ different from
- ◆ a clear difference
- ◆ a distinct difference
- ◆ a striking difference
- ◆ another distinction
- ◆ a strong distinction
- ◆ opposing
- ◆ to oppose
- ◆ an opposing view
- ◆ in apposition to
- ◆ the reverse of
- ◆ conflicting view
- ◆ for
- ◆ pro
- ◆ against
- ◆ anti
- ◆ the antithesis of

To indicate **COMPARISON**:

- ◆ compare
- ◆ comparatively
- ◆ comparable
- ◆ is compared with
- ◆ compared to
- ◆ in comparison
- ◆ also
- ◆ as well as
- ◆ like
- ◆ in like manner
- ◆ likewise
- ◆ the next likeness

- ◆ resemble
- ◆ resembling
- ◆ affinity
- ◆ correlate
- ◆ parallel
- ◆ parallel to
- ◆ consistent with
- ◆ uniformly
- ◆ in the same way
- ◆ in the same manner
- ◆ to the same extent
- ◆ synonymous
- ◆ identical

- ◆ of little difference
- ◆ equal
- ◆ equally important
- ◆ equivalent
- ◆ balance
- ◆ matching
- ◆ too
- ◆ similarly
- ◆ in a similar fashion
- ◆ analogous to
- ◆ correspondingly
- ◆ relative to
- ◆ relatively

To indicate **CAUSE & EFFECT**:

- ◆ owing to
- ◆ in effect
- ◆ due to
- ◆ as a result
- ◆ as a result of
- ◆ the end result
- ◆ the outcome
- ◆ the ramifications of
- ◆ as a consequence
- ◆ consequently

- ◆ in conclusion
- ◆ following that
- ◆ furthermore
- ◆ subsequently
- ◆ it follows that
- ◆ caused by
- ◆ because
- ◆ because of this
- ◆ for this purpose
- ◆ for this reason
- ◆ by reason of

- ◆ in view of
- ◆ hence
- ◆ henceforth
- ◆ otherwise
- ◆ therefore
- ◆ thereafter
- ◆ thus
- ◆ to this end
- ◆ on account of

To indicate **SEQUENCE**:

- ◆ first
- ◆ at first
- ◆ in the first place
- ◆ once
- ◆ once upon a time
- ◆ to begin with
- ◆ in the beginning
- ◆ at the beginning
- ◆ at the onset
- ◆ starting with
- ◆ to start
- ◆ initially
- ◆ commencing with
- ◆ embark
- ◆ from this point
- ◆ earlier
- ◆ second

- ◆ secondly
- ◆ in the second place
- ◆ the second stage
- ◆ twice
- ◆ next
- ◆ the next day/week
- ◆ the next time
- ◆ the following day/week
- ◆ after that
- ◆ following that
- ◆ immediately following
- ◆ subsequently
- ◆ on the next occasion
- ◆ in turn
- ◆ so far
- ◆ later on

- ◆ third
- ◆ in the third place
- ◆ last
- ◆ last of all
- ◆ at last
- ◆ lastly
- ◆ in the last place
- ◆ the latter
- ◆ at the end
- ◆ in the end
- ◆ final
- ◆ finally
- ◆ the final point
- ◆ the finish
- ◆ to conclude
- ◆ in conclusion

To provide an **EXAMPLE**:

- ◆ for example
- ◆ in one example
- ◆ as an example

- ◆ to exemplify
- ◆ for instance
- ◆ in this instance
- ◆ in this case

- ◆ a case in point
- ◆ to illustrate
- ◆ as an illustration of

- ◆ consider as an illustration
- ◆ to show
- ◆ to demonstrate
- ◆ to explain
- ◆ to clarify
- ◆ in order to clarify
- ◆ to illuminate
- ◆ to bring to light
- ◆ an analogy
- ◆ analogous to

- ◆ suppose that
- ◆ specifically
- ◆ in this specific instance
- ◆ to be exact
- ◆ more exactly
- ◆ in particular
- ◆ such as
- ◆ namely
- ◆ for one thing
- ◆ that is

- ◆ in fact
- ◆ in other words
- ◆ to put it another way
- ◆ in order to clarify
- ◆ one example
- ◆ in the following manner
- ◆ in the same manner
- ◆ another way

To **EMPHASIZE or INTENSIFY**:

- ◆ above all
- ◆ after all
- ◆ indeed
- ◆ in fact
- ◆ as a matter of fact
- ◆ primarily
- ◆ actually
- ◆ especially
- ◆ more important
- ◆ most importantly
- ◆ most important of all
- ◆ most of all
- ◆ increasingly

- ◆ increasingly important
- ◆ equally important
- ◆ moreover
- ◆ furthermore
- ◆ significantly
- ◆ of great concern
- ◆ of major interest
- ◆ the major reason
- ◆ the main problem
- ◆ the main issue
- ◆ to recapitulate
- ◆ to emphasize
- ◆ more emphatically

- ◆ definitely
- ◆ decidedly
- ◆ without doubt
- ◆ without a doubt
- ◆ undoubtedly
- ◆ certainly
- ◆ surely
- ◆ to be sure
- ◆ very likely
- ◆ the crux of the matter
- ◆ without question
- ◆ there is no question that

## Punctuation and Transitional Phrases

Transitional words and phrases typically either begin sentences and are set off by a comma or connect phrases within a sentence, also set off by a comma. **For example**, the sentence you are reading right now is an example of a transitional phrase beginning a sentence, set off by a comma. This sentence, **in contrast**, uses a transitional phrase set off by commas within the sentence itself.

If you want to use a transitional phrase to connect two independent clauses, then you must do so by using a semicolon at the end of the first independent clause and beginning the second with the transitional phrase, set off by a comma. Using transitional phrases this way works well to connect ideas that build upon each other; **however**, you must take care to punctuate your sentences correctly or else you run the risk of writing run-on sentences.

Transitional words and phrases are different from coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. See handouts on Coordination and Subordination to learn the difference! (**Hint**: coordinating conjunctions can be remembered with the acronym **FANBOYS**, which stands for: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. These words can be paired with commas to combine two independent clauses into one full sentence—something that transitional phrases cannot do.)