

# Using Transitions

*Transitions connect your ideas together and make it easier for your readers to follow your thoughts.*

## KEY POINTS

- Transitions can make connections between different paragraphs or they can make connections between sentences within a paragraph.
- Transitions can also connect ideas within a paragraph or they can connect different paragraphs together.
- See the full text for examples of words and phrases used in transitioning from one idea to another.

## TERM

- transition  
A word or phrase connecting one part of a discourse to another.

## EXAMPLE

- Sentence with transitions:
- "Not only does this visual evaluation reduce Jenny's identity to her profession, but it provides spectators with a false sense of knowledge about her interiority. "
- Sentence without transitions:
- "Visual evaluation reduces Jenny's identity to her profession. It provides spectators with a false sense of knowledge about her interiority. "
- In the example without transitions, it is harder to tell that the second sentence is an expansion of the idea put forward in the first sentence. When transitions are used, the words "not only" and "but" let the reader know that the secondclause is building off the first one.
- Transitions that Connect Paragraphs:
- Transitions in topic sentences can explain to the reader how a paragraph relates to the previous one. Consider this set of topic sentences from a paper about metrical variation in the poem "Caliban Upon Setebos:"
- Paragraph One:
- "Browning begins the poem by establishing a correspondence between metrical variation and subversive language. "
- Paragraph Two:

- "Once Caliban begins his exploration of the nature of Setebos, though, the pattern established earlier in the poem begins to break down. "
- Paragraph Three:
- "Browning further subverts the metrical conventions established in the opening stanza by...switching to iambic pentameter when acknowledging that unmotivated events can and do occur. "
- The transitions help the reader understand how the argument is progressing through the poem – it starts with the poem's basic meter, then explains different ways in which the pattern shifts. The word "though" in the second topic sentence lets the reader know that the pattern explained in the first paragraph is going to change in the second paragraph. The use of "further" in the third topic sentence alerts the reader that the pattern is shifting again in the third paragraph.

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## Transitions

Using transitions will make your writing easier to understand by providing connections between paragraphs or between sentences within a paragraph. Transitions can be a word, phrase or sentence—in longer works, a transition can even be a whole paragraph. The goal of a transition is to clarify to your readers exactly how your ideas are connected.

Transitions refer to both the preceding and ensuing sentence, paragraph or section of a written work. They remind your readers of what they just read, and tell them what will come next. By doing so, transitions help your writing feel like a unified whole.

## Transitions Between Paragraphs

Transitions between paragraphs highlight the relationship between two paragraphs. For example, imagine you have three paragraphs with three different topics:

1. The sun is powered by nuclear fusion.
2. Nuclear fusion here on Earth could meet all of our energy demands.
3. There are significant technological problems that make harnessing nuclear fusion power difficult.

The three topics need to be connected somehow. The first and the second ideas could be connected like this:

-- Since nuclear fusion produces enough energy to power the sun, we could use the same process here on Earth to produce all the power we would ever need.

This transition references the topic of the first paragraph (the sun is powered by fusion) and the topic of the second paragraph (fusion could meet all of our energy needs). The word "since" acts as a logical connector ("since...then...") that demonstrates how the two apparently separate ideas are actually connected.

We could connect the second and third paragraphs in a similar way:

-- Although nuclear fusion could provide ample energy, there are several technological problems that make harnessing nuclear fusion power difficult.

Again, notice how this transition links the topic of the second paragraph (fusion could meet all our energy needs) with the topic of the third paragraph (there are some difficulties with fusion).

## Transitions Within Paragraphs

Transitions within a paragraph help readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases. Words like "however," "nevertheless," "but" and "similarly," as well as phrases like "on the other hand" and "for example" can serve as transitions between sentences. See the "List of Common Transitional Devices" below for more examples.

## Transition Paragraphs

In longer works, you might need an entire paragraph to connect the ideas presented in two separate sections. The purpose of a transitional paragraph is to summarize the information in the previous paragraph, and to tell your reader how this information is related to the information in the next paragraph. Transition paragraphs are good places to review for your reader where you have been and how it relates to the next step of your argument. Before using a particular transitional word or phrase, be sure you understand its meaning and usage completely and that it is the right match for the logic in your paper. With that said, here are a few transitional devices:

### Transitional words and phrases that indicate addition:

and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further, furthermore, nor, too, next, lastly, what's more, moreover, in addition, still, first (second, etc.)

## Transitional words and phrases that indicate comparison:

whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, by comparison, where, compared to, up against, balanced against, although, conversely, in contrast, although this may be true, likewise

## Transitional words and phrases that indicate a logical connection:

because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is

## Transitional words and phrases that show exception:

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

## Transitional words and phrases that show time:

immediately, thereafter, soon, after a few hours, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first (second, etc.), next, and then

## Transitional words and phrases that indicate repetition or summarize:

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

## Transitional words and phrases that indicate emphasis:

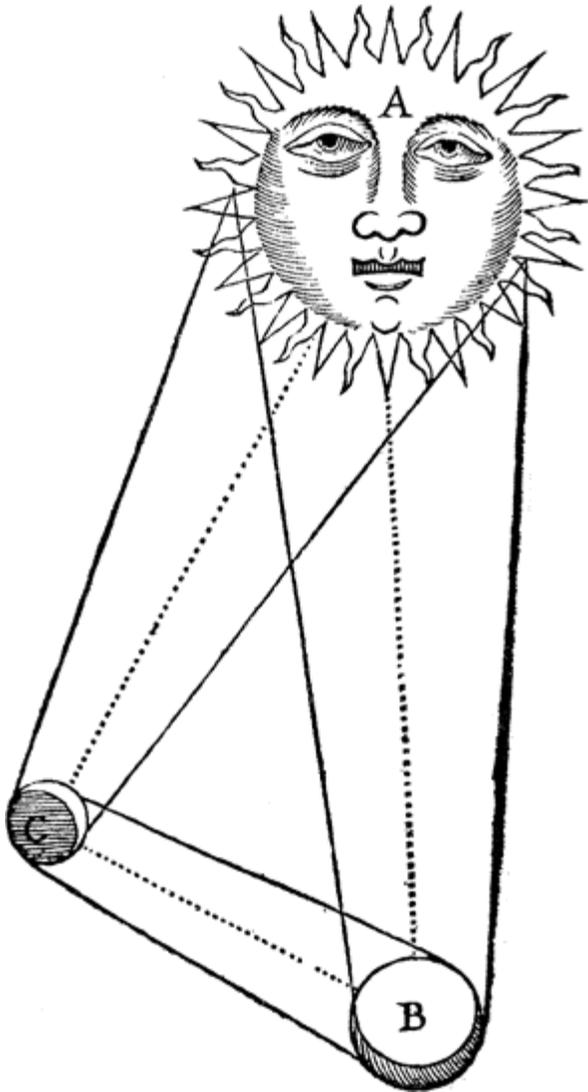
definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly

## Transitional words and phrases that indicate sequence:

first, second, third, and so forth, next, then, following this, at this time, now, at this point, after, afterward, subsequently, finally, consequently, previously, before this, simultaneously, concurrently

## Transitional words and phrases that indicate an example:

for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate



### The transition of the sun

Transitions are used to connect ideas and can appear from one sentence to the next, one paragraph to the next, or as an entire paragraph that ties together the ideas of two separate paragraphs.