

Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitions – when used effectively – can be one of the most useful components in your writing toolbox. As a writer, your main task is to lead your reader clearly through your ideas, and for readers to follow your train of thought you need to connect your sentences and paragraphs to each other.

What Can Transitions Do?

- < Support the overall clarity of your purpose or argument
- < Guide readers through the connections you are making between ideas
- < Connect the parts of your essay
- < Resolve some sentence-level concerns (especially “choppy” sentences)
- < Address concerns with overall “flow” when reading a paper

Use transitional words and phrases strategically and intentionally, yet unobtrusively: the word or phrase you choose must match the logic of the connection you are making. In other words, simply dropping a transitional word or phrase into your writing will not achieve the greater aims of their use. You should also avoid using so many transitional words and phrases that they lose meaning or leave readers with the impression that you are overexplaining already obvious connections.

The following is a **list of commonly used transitions, categorized according to their different functions** (adapted from Graff & Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter In Academic Writing*).

Cause and Effect

accordingly
as a result
consequently
hence
since
so
then
therefore
thus

Concession