

Effective Sentences and Written Transitions

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to make your written messages easy to follow by ensuring they take on a logical sequence. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Constructing Effective Sentences

We have talked about the organization of documents and paragraphs, but what about the organization of sentences? You have probably learned in English courses that each sentence needs to have a subject and a verb; most sentences also have an object.

There are four basic types of sentences:

- Declarative: *You are invited to join us for lunch.*
- Imperative: *Please join us for lunch.*
- Interrogative: *Would you like to join us for lunch?*
- Exclamatory: *I'm so glad you can join us for lunch!*

Declarative sentences make a statement, whereas interrogative sentences ask a question. Imperative sentences convey a command, and exclamatory sentences express a strong emotion.



HINT

Interrogative and exclamatory sentences are easy to identify by their final punctuation, a question mark and an exclamation point, respectively. In business writing, declarative and imperative sentences are more frequently used.

The ability to write complete, correct sentences is like any other skill—it comes with practice. The more writing you do, as you make an effort to use correct grammar, the easier it will become. Reading audiences, particularly in a business context, will not waste their time on poor writing and will move on. Your challenge as an effective business writer is to know what you are going to write and then to make it come across, via words, symbols, and images, in a clear and concise manner.



Productivity: Why Employers Care

Have you ever heard the saying "Time is money"? Employers seek out employees who can complete tasks efficiently and effectively. By improving your written communication skills, you set yourself up for success. You will be able to complete writing tasks in less time, which makes you a more productive individual.

Sentences should avoid being vague and focus on specific content. Each sentence should convey a complete thought; a vague sentence fails to meet this criteria. The reader is left wondering what the sentence was supposed to convey.

IN CONTEXT

Consider the differences between the two sentences below.

Vague: *We can facilitate solutions in pursuit of success by leveraging our core strengths.*

Specific: *By using our knowledge, experience, and capabilities, we can achieve the production targets for the coming quarter.*

Effective sentences also limit the range and scope of each complete thought, avoiding needless complexity. Sometimes writers mistakenly equate long, complex sentences with excellence and skill. Clear, concise, and often brief sentences serve to communicate ideas and concepts in effective and efficient ways that complex, hard-to-follow sentences do not.

IN CONTEXT

Consider the differences between the two sentences below.

Complex: *Air transportation features speed of delivery in ways few other forms of transportation can match, including tractor-trailer and rail, and is readily available to the individual consumer and the corporate client alike.*

Clear: *Air transportation is more accessible and faster than rail or trucking.*

Effective sentences are complete, containing a subject and a verb. Incomplete sentences - also known as sentence fragments - demonstrate a failure to pay attention to detail. They often invite misunderstanding, which is the opposite of our goal in business communication.



BIG IDEA

In business writing, we seek clear and concise writing that speaks for itself with little or no misinterpretation. The more complex a sentence becomes, the easier it is to lose track of its meaning.

2. Using Transitions in Writing



THINK ABOUT IT

If you were going to build a house, you would need a strong foundation. Could you put the beams to hold your roof in place without anything to keep them steady? Of course not; they would fall down right away. In the same way, the columns or beams are like the main ideas of your document. They need to have connections to each other so that they become interdependent and stay where you want them so that your house, or your writing, doesn't come crashing down.

Transitions involve words or phrases that help the reader follow the author's ideas, connect the main points to each other, and see the relationships you've created in the information you are presenting. They are often described as bridges between ideas, thoughts, or concepts, providing some sense of where you have been and where you are going with your document.

Transitions guide the reader in the progression from one significant idea, concept, or point to the next. They can also show the relationships between the main point and the support you are using to illustrate your point, provide examples for it, or refer to outside sources.

The following chart details the common types of written transitions, many of which you may have also seen used in public speaking contexts.

Type	Definition	Examples
Internal Preview	An internal preview is a brief statement referring to a point you are going to make. It can forecast or foreshadow a main point coming in your speech.	If we look ahead to, next we'll examine, now we can focus our attention on, first we'll look at
Signpost	A signpost alerts the reader that you are moving from one topic to the next. Signposts or signal words draw attention to themselves and focus the reader's attention.	Stop and consider, we can now address, next I'd like to explain, turning from/to, another, this reminds me of, I would like to emphasize
Internal Summary	An internal summary briefly covers information or alludes to information introduced previously. It can remind a reader of a previous point and reinforce information covered in your document.	As I have said, as we have seen, as mentioned earlier, in any event, in other words, in short, on the whole, therefore, to summarize, as a result, as I've noted previously, in conclusion
Sequence	A sequence transition outlines a hierarchical order or series of steps in your document. It can illustrate order or steps in a logical process.	First... second... third, furthermore, next, last, still, also, and then, besides, finally
Time	A time transition focuses on the chronological aspects of your text. Particularly useful in a document utilizing a story, this transition can illustrate progression of time for the reader.	Before, earlier, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, then, until, afterward
Addition	An addition or additive transition contributes to a previous point. This transition can build on a previous point and extend the discussion.	In addition to, furthermore, either, neither, besides, moreover, in fact, as a matter of fact, actually, not only, but also, as well as, not to mention
Similarity	A transition by similarity draws a parallel between two ideas, concepts, or examples. It can indicate a common area between points for the reader.	In the same way, by the same token, equally, similarly, just as we have seen, in the same vein
	A transition by comparison draws a distinction between	Like, in relation to, bigger than, smaller than, the fastest,

Comparison	two ideas, concepts, or examples. It can indicate a common or divergent area between points for the reader.	than any other, is greater than, both, either/or, likewise, even more important
Contrast	A transition by contrast draws a distinction of difference, opposition, or irregularity between two ideas, concepts, or examples. This transition can indicate a key distinction between points for the reader.	But, neither/nor, however, on the other hand, although, even though, in contrast, in spite of, despite, on the contrary, conversely, unlike, while, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, regardless, still, though, yet
Cause and Effect	A transition by cause and effect illustrates a relationship between two ideas, concepts, or examples and may focus on the outcome or result. It can illustrate a relationship between points for the reader.	As a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, accordingly, so, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end, for this reason, as a result, because, therefore, consequently, as a consequence, and the outcome was
Example	A transition by example illustrates a connection between a point and an example or examples. You may find that visuals work well with this type of transition.	In fact, as we can see, after all, even, for example, for instance, of course, specifically, such as, in the following example, to illustrate my point
Place	A place transition refers to a location, often in a spatially organized document, of one point of emphasis in relation to another. Again, visuals work well when discussing physical location with a reader.	Opposite to, there, to the left, to the right, above, below, adjacent to, elsewhere, far, farther on, beyond, closer to, here, near, nearby, next to
Clarification	A clarification transition restates or further develops a main idea or point. It can also serve as a signal to a key point.	To clarify, that is, I mean, in other words, to put it another way, that is to say, to rephrase it, in order to explain, this means
Concession	A concession transition indicates knowledge of contrary information. It can address a perception the reader may hold and allow for clarification.	We can see that while, although it is true that, granted that, while it may appear that, naturally, of course, I can see that, I admit that even though



TERM TO KNOW

Transition

In written communication, a word or phrase that helps the reader follow the writer's ideas, connect the main points to each other, and see the relationships the writer has created in the provided information.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that effective writers not only organize their message at the paragraph level, but at the sentence level as well. **Constructing effective sentences** involves using correct grammar, communicating complete and specific thoughts, and avoiding needless complexity. Within the context of a larger document, sentences often require the **use of transitions**. Transitions help to connect sentences and communicate meaning, which builds understanding.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This tutorial has been adapted from "Business Communication for Success" Version 1.0 by Scott



TERMS TO KNOW

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