

# Transitions

by Sophia

## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the role of transitions, and how to select the one that will be most effective in a given situation. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. [Transitions in Writing](#)
2. [Types of Transitions](#)
3. [Using Transitions Effectively](#)

## 1. Transitions in Writing

**Transitions** are tools that writers use in sentences and paragraphs to move from one idea to the next.

More specifically, transitions are words, phrases, or sentences that clarify connections between ideas. This means that they will click together two ideas, like building blocks, to tell the reader how a passage moves from one idea into the one that's about to come.

This can happen on a small level, such as transitions between sentences, or on a bigger level, such as transitions between paragraphs and thus between bigger, fuller ideas.

### TERM TO KNOW

#### Transition

A word, phrase, or sentence that highlights a connection between ideas.

## 2. Types of Transitions

All conjunctions, such as "like," "and," "but," and "or" are transitions. However, there are other kinds of transitions as well.

These fall into a few different categories:

- Contrast transitions show the difference between two ideas.
- Additional information transitions demonstrate that the next idea will build upon the first.
- Example transitions indicate that the next idea will be an example of the first idea.
- Qualification transitions point out that there might be conditions to the first idea.
- Result transitions identify that the first idea is a cause and the next idea is the effect.

The table below provides some examples of common transition words that fall into each of the categories.

Type	Purpose	Transition Words	Example
Contrast Transitions	Show how two ideas are different.	but, however, on the other hand	<i>I would go to the beach, but it is raining.</i>
Additional Information Transitions	Show how the next idea builds upon the previous idea.	and, additionally, furthermore	<i>In addition, I think a thunderstorm is brewing.</i>
Example Transition	Show that the next idea will be an example of the previous idea.	for example, for instance, in particular	<i>For example, I just saw lightning!</i>
Qualification Transition	Show that there could be limitations on the previous idea.	despite, although, nevertheless, yet	<i>Despite the weather, my family still wants to go to the coast.</i>
Result Transition	Show that the next idea is a result of the previous idea.	so, therefore, thus, consequently	<i>Consequently, we're headed to the beach.</i>

Now it's your turn to try these transitions out. Here are two paragraphs with some missing transitions. Read through and decide what transitions you think should fill those blanks. L

*There are many arguments for and against the use of pop culture texts in college courses. For example, some people argue that popular texts are too easy for college. [...] others argue that pop culture texts will help students be more interested. And it is clear that students want to see these texts assigned.*

*[...] we should consider whether pop culture texts are appropriate for college, [...] pop culture texts are not necessarily non-academic. Many pop culture texts are well-written and complex, just like academic texts. Therefore, popular texts can belong in college courses.*

To start, what kind of transition should this be: *For example, some people argue that popular texts are too easy for college. [...] others argue that pop culture texts will help students be more interested.*

The first sentence is an example of what some people argue, and the second is an argument from the opposite side. Therefore, this is a contrast. You might then use a contrast transition such as "on the other hand": *For example, some people argue that popular texts are too easy for college. On the other hand, others argue that pop culture texts will help students be more interested.*

What about here: *[...] we should consider whether pop culture texts are appropriate for college,*

This time, the transition is linking two paragraphs. When transitioning between paragraphs, it's useful to think about what each paragraph's main idea is. In the first paragraph, the main idea is that there are pro and con arguments for teaching these texts. In the second paragraph, there is a discussion of the ways in which pop culture texts might make sense in college courses. Thus, the argument of the first paragraph results in the exploration of the second, so this should be a result transition: *Thus, we should consider whether pop culture texts are appropriate for college,*

Finally, what about this last part: *Thus, we should consider whether pop culture texts are appropriate for college, [...] pop culture texts are not necessarily non-academic.*

This is a transition within a compound sentence, so you know that this can easily be a conjunction: *Thus, we should consider whether pop culture texts are appropriate for college, as pop-culture texts are not necessarily non-academic.*

These aren't the only transitions you could have chosen, but they represent the kinds of transitions that make the most sense in each spot. Even if you selected different transitions, your sentences will likely still make sense as long as you chose transitions from the same categories as those above.

### 3. Using Transitions Effectively

As you can see, there are lots of possible transitions you can use in any writing situation. To select the most effective transition, there are three conditions you can check.

First, avoid being too wordy. Good writing is often concise writing, so aim for brevity and avoid unnecessarily complicated phrasing.

➞ **EXAMPLE** *The voters cast their ballots and thus it came to pass that the President was not re-elected.*

The above sentence is clearly too wordy. A much better alternative would be: *The voters cast their ballots and the President was not re-elected.*

Second, match the tone of the sentences. If the paper is written in a formal voice, certain transition words such as "thus" and "therefore" are particularly useful, whereas those very formal words might sound stiff in a more casual text. It's important to think about the purpose and context of the writing.

Third, make sure that the transition itself is logical. When in doubt, ask yourself about the connection between the two ideas, and then try to fit that connection into one of the five transition categories. If the transition doesn't fit, the ideas won't make sense and the connection won't be clear.

➞ **EXAMPLE** *I want to pet the dog because he looks soft. In addition, he has fleas.*

"In addition" implies that the dog's fleas are an additional reason that you would want to pet him, but fleas are usually a reason not to pet a dog. Instead, try a different category of transition: *I want to pet the dog because he looks soft. However, he has fleas.*



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **in writing, transitions** are used to connect ideas and move from one sentence or paragraph to the next. There are five different **types of transitions**, each with a different role: Contrast transitions show the difference between two ideas, additional information transitions show that the next idea builds on the previous one, example transitions indicate that the next idea will be an example of the first, qualification transitions point out that there might be conditions to the first idea, and result transitions identify that the first idea is a cause while the next idea is an effect. As a writer, **using transitions effectively** means selecting the most appropriate transitional word or phrase for a particular context.

Best of luck in your learning!



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### Transition

A word, phrase, or sentence that highlights a connection between ideas.