

## WRITING EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS

Transitions are words, phrases, or sentences that connect parts of your essay to one another. Transitions may connect one sentence to another, one paragraph to another, or one section of the essay to another. Essentially, transitions show the relationships of your sentences and paragraphs to one another and to your overall argument. Writing effective transitions will make your argument easier to follow and improve the overall flow of your essay. A typical essay needs three kinds of transitions: transitions between sentences, transitions between paragraphs, and transitions between sections.

### Writing Transitions between Sentences:

- Use transitions to show relationships between your sentences. One sentence may make an additional point, provide an example or evidence, or discuss an exception to a previous sentence. While it may seem clear to you (the writer) why each sentence is where it is, the connection may not be clear to the reader without transitions to show the reader how your ideas are connected.
  - **Poor Transition:** Many students are tempted to plagiarize because they run out of time on an assignment. Good time management skills will give students plenty of time to complete assignments.
  - **Better Transition:** Many students are tempted to plagiarize because they run out of time on an assignment. However, students can reduce the temptation to plagiarize if they exercise better time management skills to ensure that they will have plenty of time to complete assignments.
- In the “Better Transition” example above, the writer indicates the connection between the two sentences by repeating key words and including a transition word. The writer uses *temptation* and *plagiarize* in the second sentence to echo the phrase “tempted to plagiarize” in the first sentence. The writer also uses the transition word *however* to indicate the contrast between the two sentences.

### Writing Transitions between Paragraphs:

- Use transitions to show relationships between paragraphs. No matter how well-constructed each paragraph may be on its own, your paragraphs must be logically connected to make your essay a coherent whole. Connect your paragraphs with sentences that include key ideas from each paragraph and show the relationship between the paragraphs.
  - **Poor Transition:**
  - Paragraph A: Malcolm X uses the rhetorical strategy of logos (logic) to convince his audience. . . . [paragraph about logos]
  - Paragraph B: Malcolm X's article also has a lot of pathos (emotion). . . . [paragraph about pathos]

- **Better Transition:**
- Paragraph A: One of the main rhetorical strategies employed by Malcom X is logos (logic). . . . [paragraph about logos]
- Paragraph B: In addition to using logos as a rhetorical strategy, Malcolm X also employs pathos (emotion) to persuade his audience; in fact, there are more examples of pathos in the article than logos. . . . [paragraph about pathos]
- In the “Better Transition,” the writer uses the signal phrase “in addition” to indicate that the second paragraph is an additional point to the author’s argument. The transition also refers to the main idea from the first paragraph (logos), and the second clause (“in fact, there are more examples of pathos. . .”) shows the relationship between the two points. Not only does the second paragraph illustrate an additional point, but the transition suggests it also illustrates a more significant point.

### Writing Transitions between Sections:

- Use transitional sentences to connect sections of your paper. A longer paper is often divided into sections of more than one paragraph each. For example, a problem/solution paper may include several paragraphs about the problem that is being identified and several paragraphs about the solution that is being proposed. Effective transitions between the sections of the paper guide the reader through the steps of the argument and improve the flow of your writing. Transitional sentences between sections, like those between paragraphs, should refer to the main idea of each section and illustrate the connection between them.
  - **Poor Transition:**
  - Section A: [section about problem of plagiarism]
  - Section B: One way to prevent plagiarism is to educate students about the different kinds of plagiarism.
  - **Better Transition:**
  - Section A: [section about problem of plagiarism]
  - Section B: Plagiarism is clearly a widespread problem in American university classrooms, and it negatively affects both students and teachers. However, there are a number of ways to prevent plagiarism: some experts have proposed solutions such as . . . .
- In the “Better Transition” above, the writer refers to the main idea of the previous section (the problem of plagiarism) and the main idea of the upcoming section (solutions to the problem of plagiarism). The writer also indicates a relationship between the two sections with *however*, which indicates a contrast between the two sections.

## Conclusion:

To sum up, remember to indicate the relationships between ideas at the section, paragraph, and sentence levels. The chart below lists words and phrases you can use to signal the relationships between your ideas.

<b>Relationship Between Ideas</b>	<b>Signal Words/Phrases</b>
Summarizing/restating	In other words, to put it another way, in brief, in simpler terms, on the whole, in fact, to sum up, in short, in conclusion, to conclude, therefore
Adding ideas to a list	And, also, too, besides, as well, moreover, in addition, furthermore, in effect, second, in the second place, again, next
Comparing	Similarly, likewise, in like manner, in the same way
Contrasting	On the other hand, but, or, however, unlike, nevertheless, on the contrary, conversely, in contrast, instead, counter to
Relating Cause and Effect	Therefore, accordingly, hence, thus, for, so, consequently, as a result, because of, due to, eventually, inevitably
Qualifying (limiting the breadth of your claim)	For the most part, by and large, with few exceptions, mainly, in most cases, generally, some, sometimes, typically, frequently, rarely
Giving Examples	For example, for instance, in this case, in particular, to illustrate
Emphasizing	It is true, truly, indeed, of course, to be sure, obviously, without doubt, evidently, clearly, understandably

Table of transition words and phrases has been adapted from The Bedford Guide for College Writers, 9th ed.

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