



Paragraph Transitions

You can use transitions in your essay to ensure a clear and coherent communication with your reader. Transitions are sometimes difficult to understand, but anyone and everyone can use them.

What do transitions do?

When you are writing multiple paragraphs, it is important to show how the paragraphs are related logically. Different types of essays do this in different ways; however, the most prevalent way is to use transition phrases. These transitions will serve as a map for your readers, so they won't get lost. In short, transitions can:

- Address an essential similarity or dissimilarity (likewise, in contrast, despite, etc)
- Suggest a meaningful ordering (first, in addition, thus, therefore)
- In a longer paper, remind the reader of what has earlier been argued (in short, as has been said, on the whole)¹

Remember, your transitions should relate a paragraph to the previous in a logical way. The level of success your essay has may depend on your reader's ability to understand what you are saying, so using transitions effectively is crucial.

Transition Strategy

When you use transitions, repetition is your enemy. If you say, "however" or some other transition word or phrase, it will begin to feel redundant; redundancy leads to loss of meaning, and loss of meaning leads to a lack of reader interest. Instead, switch things up; going out of your comfort zone is OK. But remember, the transitions you use should match your writing style, so in the end, use transitions that feel right.

A list of transition phrases can be found at

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/transitions_and_transitional_devices/transitional_devices.html.

If you have any other questions regarding transition phrases, schedule an appointment with the Writing Center. We are always happy to help!

¹ University of Washington, "Using Transitions Effectively," (Odegaard Writing & Research Center), 1.