

The Function and Importance of Transitions

In both academic writing and professional writing, your goal is to **convey information clearly and concisely**. Transitions **establish logical connections** between sentences, paragraphs, and sections of your papers.

Basically, transitions provide the reader with **directions for how to piece together your ideas** into a logically coherent argument. Transitions are **not just "window dressing"** that embellish your paper by making it sound or read better.

Example: Janice eats ice-cream, because her doctor tells her not to.

Janice eats ice-cream, even though her doctor tells her not to.

Janice eats ice-cream; soon, her doctor tells her not to.

How Transitions Work

The organization of your written work includes two elements: **(1) the order in which you have chosen to present the different parts of your discussion or argument, and (2) the relationships you construct between these parts.**

Example: Topic: Is it better to live in the countryside, or in the city.

Paragraph A; Transition; Paragraph B

In this case, the transition words "Despite the previous arguments," suggest that the reader should not believe paragraph A and instead should consider the writer's reason in paragraph B.

Types of Transitions

1. **Transitions within Paragraphs**--Transitions within paragraphs act as cues by **helping readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it**. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases.

Examples: Topic sentence; Support A; Transition; Support B; Wrap-up sentence

2. **Transitions between Paragraphs**--If you have done a good job of arranging paragraphs so that the content of one leads logically to the next, the transition will highlight a relationship that already exists by summarizing the previous paragraph and suggesting something of the content of the paragraph that follows. A transition between paragraphs can be a word or two (*however, for example, similarly*), a phrase, or a sentence.

Explicit transitions v.s. Implicit transitions

That article had taught me a lot of things; however, I discovered that many of them were incorrect.

That article had taught me a lot of things, things that I later found to be mostly incorrect.

3. **Transitions between Sections**--Particularly in longer works, it may be necessary to include transitional paragraphs that summarize for the reader the information just covered and specify the relevance of this information to the discussion in the following section.

Organization

Since the clarity and effectiveness of your transitions will depend greatly on how well you have organized your paper, you may want to evaluate your paper's organization before you work on transitions. In the margins of your draft, summarize in a word or short phrase what each paragraph is about or how it fits into your analysis as a whole. This exercise should help you to see the order of and connection between your ideas more clearly.