

Writing and Humanities Tutoring Center



Using Transition Words

Transition words are powerful tools that unite a piece of writing and give it a cohesion. They allow us to shed light on the relationships between complex ideas and control or direct the reader's attention. When a reader encounters a transition word, it lets them know important things like the sequence of items being discussed, the relationships between sentences, and the overall structure of a paragraph or essay.

- **Sequential** transition words put things in a certain order. We use them to number our points, list off parts to an idea, or number the parts of an essay.
 - Examples: firstly, secondly, lastly, next, finally, before, after
- **Emphatic** transition words are used to stress certain points or ideas. They should be used sparingly.
 - Examples: indeed, clearly, obviously, particularly, absolutely, fundamentally, ultimately, universally
- **Additive** transition words signal that additional points or elaborations are going to be made. As writers we often need to signal to the reader that there is more to understand or see in order for our ideas to be clear. The information must be similar or build upon each other in order for an additive transition to be correctly used.
 - Examples: in addition, furthermore, moreover, as well as, and, also, along with, including, equally, similarly, on the second hand
- **Contrastive** transition words clarify that two or more pieces of information contradict, disagree, or come in conflict with one another in some way. This is great for discussing the nuances of an argument, and thus it is very important for writers to master.
 - Examples: but, however, despite, in spite of, nonetheless, conversely, in contrast, not only, but also, even so, on the other hand,
- **Causal** transition words are important as they (alongside additive and contrastive words) allow writers to clarify the logical relationships between ideas and pieces of information. Causal words imply that two pieces of information are causing one another or possess a cause-and-effect relationship.
 - Examples: because, as a result, in effect, thus, consequently, similarly, as the evidence shows, therefore
- **Demonstrative** transition words are important for providing evidence and smoothly moving from ideas to examples. They show your ideas and signal to the reader where your examples are.
 - Examples: for instance, for example, examples include, this includes, such as, in the first hand

There are others types of transition words like summative and comparative that also serve important functions. Know that It's okay to use smart-sounding words, but an experienced reader will be able to see through unnecessary transitions because they might not make sense! Using them well requires careful consideration of their meaning and impact. Before using a transition word, ask yourself "Do I really need it? Does it help my writing? Is it making something clear?"