

Usage of Transition Words in Formal Writing

Transition words and phrases are vital devices for **longer compositions, such as essays or complex paragraphs**. They improve the connections and transitions between ideas, sentences and paragraphs. Consequently, they give the text a logical organization and structure, creating a better flow for your reader.

All English **transition words** and **phrases** do the same work as **conjunctions**: they connect two words, phrases or clauses together and thus the text is easier to read and the coherence is improved.

Usage: transition words are used with a special rule for **punctuation**. A **semicolon** or a **period** is used after the first sentence, and a **comma** is almost always used to set off the transition word from the second sentence.

Use a semicolon to connect sentences, ONLY if the group of words on either side of the semicolon is a complete sentence each (both must have a subject and a verb, and could therefore stand alone as a complete thought).

Example 1:

People use 43 muscles when they frown; in contrast, they use only 28 muscles when they smile.

Example 2:

However, transition words can also be placed at the beginning of a new paragraph or sentence.

Transition Words and Phrases

Agreement / Addition / Similarity

The transition words like *also, in addition, and, likewise*, add information, reinforce ideas, and express agreement with preceding material.

- in comparison
- comparatively
- similarly
- likewise
- additionally
- in addition
- in like manner
- further
- furthermore
- moreover
- in the same fashion
- in the same way
- equally important
- by the same token
- again
- also
- equally
- identically
- as well as
- together with
- correspondingly
- at the same time

Opposition / Limitation / Contradiction

Transition phrases like **but**, **rather** and **or**, express that there is evidence to the **contrary** or point out **alternatives**, and thus introduce a change the line of reasoning (**contrast**).

- in contrast
- conversely
- otherwise
- different from
- however
- on the other hand
- on the contrary
- in spite of this
- even so / though
- that being said
- be that as it may
- then again
- in reality
- after all
- but
- unlike
- yet
- while
- albeit
- besides
- instead
- whereas
- despite
- although
- rather
- nevertheless
- regardless
- notwithstanding

Examples / Support / Emphasis

These transitional devices (like **especially**) are used to introduce examples as **support**, to indicate **importance** or as an **illustration** so that an idea is cued to the reader.

- for example
- for instance
- notably
- namely
- indeed
- in fact
- in general
- in particular
- in detail
- to demonstrate
- to emphasize
- to repeat
- to clarify
- to put it differently
- for one...
- as an illustration
- in this case
- for this reason
- to put it another way
- that is to say
- with attention to
- by all means
- important to realize
- another key point
- most compelling evidence
- must be remembered
- a point often overlooked
- to point out
- on the positive / negative side
- with this in mind
- including
- to be sure
- chiefly
- truly
- certainly
- surely
- markedly
- specifically
- expressively
- surprisingly
- frequently
- significantly
- to enumerate
- such as

Effect / Consequence / Result

Some of these transition words (**thus, then, accordingly, consequently, therefore, henceforth**) are time words that are used to show that **after** a particular time there was a **consequence** or an **effect**. Note that **for** and **because** are placed before the cause/reason. The other devices are placed before the consequences or effects.

- **as a result**
- **under those circumstances**
- **in that case**
- **for this reason**
- **that being said**
- **thus**
- **because**
- **then**
- **hence**
- **consequently**
- **therefore**
- **thereupon**
- **forthwith**
- **accordingly**
- **henceforth**

Conclusion / Summary / Restatement

These transition words and phrases **conclude, summarize** and / or **restate** ideas, or indicate a final **general statement**. Also some words (like **therefore**) from the **Effect / Consequence** category can be used to summarize.

- **in conclusion**
- **in summary**
- **overall**
- **after all**
- **all in all**
- **in the final analysis**
- **to summarize**
- **to conclude**
- **to sum up**
- **as can be seen**
- **generally speaking**
- **all elements considered**
- **as shown above**
- **in the long run**
- **given these points**
- **as has been noted**
- **in a word**
- **for the most part**
- **in fact**
- **in short**
- **in brief**
- **once again**
- **in essence**
- **altogether**
- **by and large**
- **on the whole**
- **in any event**
- **in any case**

Time / Chronology / Sequence

These transitional words (like **finally**) have the function of limiting, restricting, and defining **time**.

- to begin
- to commence
- at the present time
- at the same time
- in due time
- until now
- as soon as
- in the meantime
- in a moment
- without delay
- in the first place
- at this instant
- quickly
- finally
- after
- later
- last
- until
- since
- then
- before
- hence
- since
- next
- now
- formerly
- suddenly
- shortly
- henceforth
- whenever
- eventually
- meanwhile
- further
- during
- first / second...
- in time
- prior to
- forthwith
- straightaway
- instantly
- presently
- occasionally
- from time to time
- as stated earlier
- as stated above

Many transition words in the time category (**consequently; first, second, third; further; hence; henceforth; since; then, when; and whenever**) have other uses. Except for the numbers (**first, second, third**) and **further** they add a meaning of **time** in expressing conditions, qualifications, or reasons. The numbers are also used to **add information** or **list examples**. **Further** is also used to indicate added space as well as added time.