



Transitions

Use transitional words and phrases to help your readers move smoothly from one idea to the next, from one sentence to the next, and indeed from one paragraph to the next. Transitional words are the signposts that tell your readers how your thoughts and ideas are related to each other. Without transitional devices, essays could be nearly incomprehensible; at the very least they would be open to widely divergent interpretations, and your meaning might be greatly obscured. When well done, transitional devices are nearly undetectable because they make prose smooth and easy to understand, and they clearly indicate the kind of relationship one thought has to the next. Therefore, your first step is to determine how your thoughts are related. For instance, if you want to expand your idea, you could use, “furthermore,” “moreover,” or “additionally.” If, on the other hand, you want to show contrast you might use “conversely,” “whereas,” or “in contrast.” In the first case continuative transitions allow you to expand an idea; in the second case discontinuative transitions help you reverse course or offer a contrasting idea.

Use **continuative transitions** to indicate that your thoughts go together in a way that moves your argument along in the same direction. You can use continuative transitions specifically to

add to – and, also, moreover, furthermore, further, too, in addition, what's more,

compare (similarity) – similarly, likewise, in like manner

show sequence (show time) – first, second, etc.; then; next

restate (emphasize) – in other words, that is, in sum, in short

give examples – for example, for instance, thus

indicate a premise – because, since, for

conclude (summarize) – therefore, finally, hence, so, in consequence (consequently), thus, as I have shown, as I have said

Use **discontinuative transitions** to indicate when you are interrupting your thoughts or changing their direction. Specifically, you can use discontinuative transitions to

contrast (show difference) – in contrast, on the other hand, on the contrary, by comparison, compared to, conversely, but, yet, however

show non-sequential events – earlier, much later, meanwhile, at the same time

replace – rather, instead, but

concede – although, given, granted, of course, however, but

alternate – otherwise, or

deny an implication – nevertheless, still, but, yet, however

Transition Exercises

Please indicate how the following thoughts might be related:

1. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Who begins too much accomplishes little.
2. All law begins in literature. The pen is mightier than the sword.
3. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Cheaters never prosper.
4. The journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step. Look before you leap.
5. Don't judge a book by its cover. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.
6. Every dog has his day. Never stand between a dog and the hydrant (John Peers).

Insert an appropriate transitional word:

1. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread _____ he who hesitates is lost.
2. An ounce of prevention is worth a of pound of cure _____ as Dave Barry says, "Never tell a woman that you didn't realize she was pregnant unless you're certain that she is."
_____ Harry Morgan reminds us, "Never insult seven men if you're only carrying a six shooter."
3. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery _____ W. Somerset Maugham reminds us, "Quotation is a serviceable substitute for wit."
4. In *Collected Essays* T. H. Huxley tells us, "It is the customary fate of new truths to begin as heresies and to end as superstitions" _____ in *Optimism* Helen Keller feels that "the heresy of one age becomes the orthodoxy of the next."
5. Descartes declares, "I think, therefore I am." In *Immortality* Milan Kundera _____ suggests, "'I think, therefore I am' is the statement of an intellectual who underrates toothaches."

Suggested Answers

1. discontinuative – contrast, concession, denied implication, replacement
 2. continuative – add to, premise, conclusion
 3. discontinuative – non-sequential - at the same time, contrast, replacement
 4. discontinuative – concession, denied implication
 5. continuative – similarity, restatement
 6. continuative – premise, conclusion
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1. yet, on the other hand, at the same time (could also be concession – although ... it is also true)
 - 2a. for instance, hence, thus, therefore, or, (could be premise – since we know ...)
 - 2b. similarly, and, furthermore, in addition
 3. meanwhile, on the other hand, however
 4. in contrast, at the same time, nevertheless
 5. conversely, otherwise, instead, at the same time

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