



Transition words & phrases

What purpose do transition words/phrases serve?

Transition words or phrases are meant to organize the information in your work and provide a smooth flow of paragraphs. They help make your written work orderly, and ensure that your essay does not come across as haphazard or disjointed. Good transition helps the reader understand the connection between the points you are making in your work.

For instance, imagine you outlined your essay's paragraphs like this:

My Essay:

Introduction and Thesis

Argument 1 in support of the topic

Example 1

Argument 2 in support of the topic

Counterargument for balance

Example 2 of counterargument

Conclusion

Looking at this outline, you can guess that the fifth paragraph on counterarguments would probably start with words or phrases like “however,” “on the other hand,” or “on the contrary.” Once you have written the draft and find that your paragraphs are choppy or disjointed, you can use the outline to see which transition word would suit the paragraph and take help from the table below. If you think that none are applicable, it may be that you did not treat the paragraph as you had planned in your outline, or that your writing style eliminated the need for one. In this case, you might want to review your paragraph, or its placement according to your outline.

When must I use transition words?

If you are writing a formal paper, it is likely that most paragraphs will need transition words as beginnings. However, they do not need to be inserted at the beginning of every single paragraph of your essay. Sometimes, you may also need to put transition words in between a paragraph. Some paragraphs may also do well without one, depending on your first sentence.

When do I need to use transition words, and how do I know which one to use?

You may need to put in a transition word at the start of a new paragraph which:

1. is making a similar point (**likewise, similarly**)
2. is talking about a difference (**in contrast, on the other hand**)
3. is making a point in addition to the one(s) already made in the previous paragraphs (**moreover, in addition to**)
4. goes in a sequence (**firstly, secondly, thirdly, next, then, finally**)
5. is about to give an example (**for example, for instance, namely, specifically, to expand, to illustrate**)
6. is about to state something emphatically (**notably, to be sure, truly, indeed, to emphasize**)
7. is showing a causal relationship (**thus, therefore, thereupon, henceforth, accordingly, because, consequently**)
8. is about to show a spatial relationship (**in the background, in the foreground, on this side**)
9. is summing up points already made (**in short, as has been said, on the whole**)
10. concludes your essay (**finally, in a word, in brief, briefly, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, to conclude, to summarize, to sum up, in summary, given these points, overall, ultimately**)