

Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitional words and phrases show the relationship between ideas. Transitions are used to link ideas within a sentence, within a paragraph, or within a longer piece of writing. Transitions help the reader to follow the writer's train of thought.

Let's say I want to show the relationship between these two sentences:

The river was gradually changing its course. The cliff continued to erode.

Is the river causing the erosion or not? Adding a transitional can help the reader to know the answer:

*The river was gradually changing its course; **therefore** the cliff continued to erode.*

Different transitional modifiers imply different meanings; how does the meaning change in each of the following?

*The river was gradually changing its course. **In addition**, the cliff continued to erode.*

*The river was gradually changing its course; **however**, the cliff continued to erode.*

Below are a list of transitional words and phrases:

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To compare or link similar ideas:

also	moreover	in addition	too
besides	furthermore	in the same way	each of
similarly	both	and	likewise

To contrast or limit ideas:

however	nevertheless	on the other hand	still
even so	although	and yet	but
conversely	in spite of	neither...nor	on the contrary
instead			

To indicate time or position:

meanwhile	eventually	first (second, etc.)	before
afterward	nearby	later	soon

To show cause and effect:

therefore	as a result	accordingly
consequently	thus	because

To offer a summary, an example or a conclusion:

for instance	for example	after all
in fact	in conclusion	in other words
on the whole	in short	on the other hand
as a result	therefore	thus

Exercise 1:**(2 points)**

Directions: Read the following essay by Raquel Cruz¹ and circle or highlight the transitional expressions.

Some people think that children are interested only in material things, and that adults invent symbols to make life complicated, but I think that symbols start in childhood. For example, I remember learning about one symbol before I could even read. A door was one of my first symbols.

I was four years old when I faced that door, the door of a kindergarten in a small elementary school in Patillas, Puerto Rico. The door was big, and it was painted a bone white color. When I saw it, I felt defenseless because I knew that beyond it, someone would take away my freedom to do the things I wanted. Besides, I was scared because the other children were bigger than I was, and the teacher wasn't my mother. I started to cry. Then my mother lost her patience and began to yell at me. At the same time, the teacher pulled me towards the door. I just saw the room on the other side and I could not see any light, any fun. I cried because I wanted to go with my mother, and I couldn't understand why she was leaving me by this door. I felt miserable and angry as she walked away.

However, everything changed when I decided to go through that door. The teacher closed it in back of me and I had to stay. First I was quiet and watched. Then I began to understand about routines. For instance, there was a time for everything: a time to play, a time to eat, a time to sleep, and the time that I liked most, a time to go home. I tried to survive. Soon I began to make friends and to behave the way the other children did. Meanwhile, I learned to make arrangements with myself to adapt to an environment full of new rules and methods. I learned to color figures, to complete puzzles, and to walk instead of run. Finally, I walked in and out of that door freely every day.

Now, looking back, I can see that the door that made me afraid and confused yesterday opened the way to my present life. In addition it opened the way to other doors, more complicated, surrounded with decisions, and leading to events that have been sometimes good and sometimes bad. There are others waiting for me, and they all offer me different choices. In fact, though, they all look a little bit like that big white door I first decided to go through when I was very small.

Exercise 2:

Directions: Fill in the blanks with an appropriate transitional expression from the list above. **(3 points)**

For some people, high school and college are a waste of time. _____ a friend of mine was an A student throughout high school. _____ he was accepted into college without any trouble. He studied hard for four years. _____ he received a degree and entered the job market. _____ he was unable to get a job in his field of study, even though he applied everywhere. _____ he was forced to apply for a job which required none of the skills he had obtained in school.

_____ I have become convinced that high school and college are not always the best preparation for the real world.

¹ Adapted from "Sentence Sense." 31 August 2003. <http://webster.comnet.edu/sensen/part3/sixteen/techniques_transitional.html>

