

Transition Words & Phrases



Transitional Words & Phrases

Addition	Argument	Cause and Effect
As well	Best of all	As a result
Besides	Especially	Because
Equally Important	In fact	Consequently
In addition	Most importantly	For that reason
In other words	Obviously	Since
Likewise	Of course	Therefore
Moreover	Understandably	
Similarly	Worst of all	
Contrast	Illustration	Space
But	Finally	Across
Despite	For example	Below
However	For instance	Behind
In contrast	Namely	Between
On the contrary	Specifically	In front
On the other hand	Such as	Near
Nevertheless	That is	Next to
Nonetheless	To illustrate	Opposite
Summary	Time	
Accordingly	Finally	After
In conclusion	First	At last
In other words	Following	Before
In short/brief	Immediately	Beginning with
Thus	Initially	Currently
	Last	During
	Meanwhile	Earlier
	Next	Eventually

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Transition words and phrases are an important part of the English language. They are used to connect words and sentences, often by referring back to one idea and signaling the introduction of a new one. Transition words can also help a passage of writing flow better, although it is best not to overuse them. Consider the example:

- James did not go to the movies. He visited his grandparents *instead*.

The transition word in the above example is *instead*. It links the two sentences together by referring back to the first sentence and signaling that an alternative idea has been introduced. Consider the example without the transition word:

- James did not go to the movies. He visited his grandparents.

The lack of a link between the two sentences leaves things a bit vague. We do not explicitly know that the two sentences are related, whereas the previous example shows that James visited his grandparents as an alternative to going to the movies. There are 100s of transition words and phrases in English. Indeed, because of the evolution of language over time, new transition phrases can appear all the time. Often transition words are conjunctive adverbs – words like *however, also, indeed, instead, still, therefore* – or phrases containing conjunctive adverbs, conjunctions and adverbs. The point is that transition words cover a wide variety of language, but it's more important to recognize their function rather than categorize them.

When to Use Transition Words?

Fundamentally, we use transition words to connect sentences and words together. They often refer back to the previous sentence or words within a sentence, and let the reader know that there is some related or new information on its way. There are different types of transition words and phrases, and not all of them have this simplistic explanation for their use. Consider the passage below, and notice the highlighted transition words and phrases: I do not like dairy products very much, *particularly* cheese. *However*, I make an exception for ice cream, *especially* chocolate ice cream. *Indeed*, ice cream is probably

my favorite thing to eat. *Admittedly*, I am also aware that ice cream is very fattening, *not to mention* full of sugar. *In other words*, ice cream isn't very healthy. **Nevertheless**, life is too short to worry about these things. *With this in mind*, I will continue to eat ice cream every day. I may end up overweight, *of course*. **On balance**, this is a price I am willing to pay for delicious – especially chocolate – ice cream. Can you see how the transition words and phrases stitch the fabric of the passage together? They act as signals by referring to the previous sentence and introducing new ideas in the next, or by referring back to previous information in the same sentence and changing the emphasis of it. Normally, transition words and phrases help a passage of writing flow better, but it's also recommended not to use too many transition words, as it can make the writing a bit confusing or heavy. As an example, the passage above arguably uses too many transitional words and phrases from a stylistic standpoint and would be easier to read with fewer transitions.

Types of Transition Words

As we mentioned, transition words are normally used to link words and sentences by referring back to one idea and introducing a new one. However, transition words do this in a variety of ways. With that in mind, let's break down the different types of transition words into categories based on the way they link words together. Here are some of the main ways transition words are used: To introduce a new idea or opposite point of view:

- But, while, conversely, however, nevertheless, yet, instead, nonetheless, although, though, even though, incidentally.
- I went to his house hoping to find him; *yet*, he was not there.
- They told her they weren't happy with her designs, *but* she *nevertheless* resolved to go on.

To introduce a conclusion:

- Finally, so, as, therefore, thus, consequently, in conclusion, since, as such, finally, subsequently.
- *Finally*, the choir began singing.
- *Since* that is the case, we have no choice but to resign.

To introduce a list or point out a sequence of events:

- First, second, third, firstly, secondly, first of all, last of all, finally, lastly, after that, until, including, next.
- We go to Paris this Sunday. *After that*, Rome.
- *First of all*, let me tell you what happened. *Then* you can decide.

To admit a concession:

- Of course, admittedly, even so, naturally, alas.
- There is another way to do it, *of course*.
- *Admittedly*, it was my biggest mistake.

To add emphasis or additions.

- Likewise, in addition, furthermore, also, additionally, moreover, indeed, namely, in fact, for the most part, as a matter of fact.
- David, Benjamin and Ellie laughed. *Indeed*, even Daniel found it funny.
- *For the most part*, the kids in the classroom kept quiet.

To introduce clauses and conditions:

- On the condition that, in light of, in order to, provided that, whenever, while, as long as.
- You can go, *as long as* you are back by midnight.
- *Whenever* you return, lock the door after you.

The above just shows a small selection of different transition words and phrases, but there are many more words and phrases used in this way. It can also be somewhat confusing, because sometimes the words on the list above can be used in a sentence without it being a transition word. Consider these two sentences:

- Despite nerves, Donna came *first* in the race. (*First* is not a transition word in this sentence.)
- To win a race, *first* you must believe you can win. (*First* is a transition word in this sentence.)

Examples of Transition Words

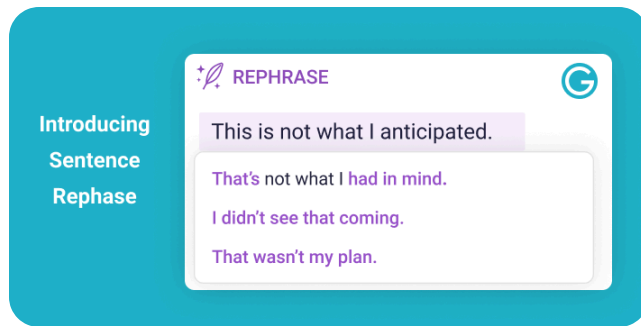
Below are some more examples of transition words in sentences:

- The Queen is the UK's Head of State. **Additionally**, she is also the Head of State for Australia.
- We were hungry. *However*, because the kitchen was already closed, we didn't eat until morning.
- One doesn't need to attend college. There are, **in fact**, many ways to obtain knowledge.
- She was very tired. *Indeed*, she hadn't slept for weeks.
- *In light of* recent weather events, the show will be cancelled.
- *Finally*, the car came to a skidding halt.
- You should go to the conference. *Likewise*, Bill and Caren should go too.
- It's obvious you don't want me here. *As a result*, I have decided I will leave tomorrow.
- We are German citizens. *But* we are also citizens of Europe.
- He lowered his voice, *as if* to underline the seriousness of the matter.
- Monkeys groom each other *in order to* build relationships.
- Michael and Sarah are here. I was chatting with them earlier, *as a matter of fact*.

Why are Transition Words Important?

Without transition words and phrases, language would be somewhat stiff. They sew words and sentences together, helping them flow better by acting as a link to what was previously stated in the passage. Yet, they are more than that, they act as signals in writing to show shifts in ideas, tone and emphasis, and introduce conclusions, sequences and contradictions. The key to understanding them lies in the name itself: Transition words. Transition means change, and these words indicate that there has been a change or that a change is forthcoming. This change could be subtle, like a shift in emphasis, or more obvious, like the offering of a contrary idea or conclusion, but transition words, nevertheless, act as a signal for that change. In the end, this is important because it gets to the root of how we understand language, as these transition words act like bridges through words, sentences and meaning.

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