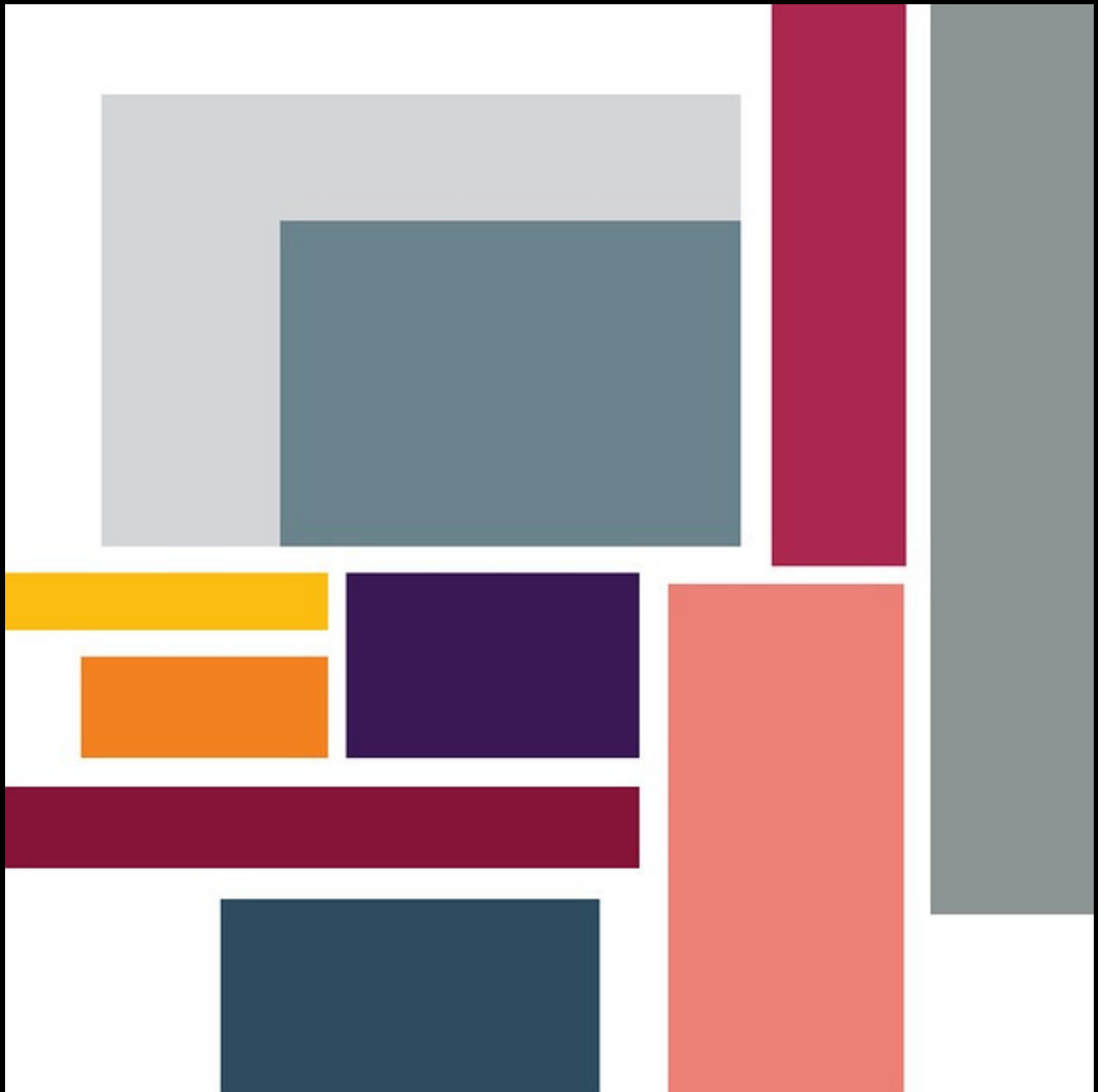


Transitional Words and Phrases



Transitional Words & Phrases

Lesson & Exercise

There are three main types of transitions:

Continuers

Continuers are words such as *and*, *in addition*, *furthermore*, and *moreover*, which indicate that a sentence is continuing in the same direction it began.

Correct: The sun streamed through the window into the living room, **and** its brightness was so great that it lit up the hall as well.

Contradictors

Contradictors are words such as *but*, *yet*, *although*, and *however* that indicate a sentence is shifting directions or introducing contradictory information.

Correct: Antibiotics were not invented until the twentieth century, **but** many ancient cultures used specially selected mold and plant extracts to treat infections.

Correct: Antibiotics were not invented until the twentieth century; **however**, many ancient cultures used specially selected mold and plant extracts to treat infections.

Cause-and-Effect Words

Common examples are *so*, *for*, *therefore*, *because*, and *since*. They indicate that an action or occurrence is causing a particular result, or that a result is occurring because of a particular action.

Correct: The first astronauts were required to undergo mental evaluation before their flight **because** the psychological dangers inherent in space travel were judged to be as important as the physiological ones.

The chart on the following page lists many common transitional words and phrases.

Common Transitions

Continuers	Contradictors	Cause-and-Effect
Add Information Also* And Furthermore In addition Moreover	Alternatively (Al)though But Conversely Despite Even so Even though However In any case In spite of Instead Meanwhile Nevertheless Nonetheless Otherwise Rather Regardless Still Whereas While Yet	Accordingly As a result As such Because Consequently For Hence Since So Thus Therefore To that end
Give Example For example For instance	In any case In spite of Instead Meanwhile Nevertheless Nonetheless Otherwise Rather Regardless Still Whereas While Yet	
Define, Clarify Effectively Essentially In other words That is	In any case In spite of Instead Meanwhile Nevertheless Nonetheless Otherwise Rather Regardless Still Whereas While Yet	
Emphasize In fact Indeed	In any case In spite of Instead Meanwhile Nevertheless Nonetheless Otherwise Rather Regardless Still Whereas While Yet	
Compare Likewise Similarly	Contrast Alternately Alternatively In contrast On the contrary On the other hand	
Sequence of Events Finally Next Previously Subsequently Then While		

Note: coordinating, or FANBOYS, conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) follow a comma; all other conjunctions follow a semicolon or period when used to begin a clause.

In addition, in formal writing, *also* should not be used to begin a sentence. Use *in addition, furthermore, or moreover* as an alternative.

Incorrect Conjunction Type

Conjunction errors can be tricky to catch because they are based on meaning rather than grammar. A transition that creates an illogical relationship may sound perfectly fine in the context of a sentence. It is only when you stop and consider the relationship between the statements that the problem becomes apparent.

Incorrect: Researchers are unable to drill into the Earth's core, **but** its chemical composition remains a mystery.

In the above sentence, the second statement indicates a result of the first: the Earth's chemical composition remains a mystery because its core is inaccessible.

Correct: Researchers are unable to drill into the Earth's core, **so** its chemical composition remains a mystery.

Correct: Researchers are unable to drill into the Earth's core; **therefore/thus**, its chemical composition remains a mystery.

To determine the relationship (compare/contrast/cause-and-effect) between a set of clauses, start by placing the statements next to one another.

For example, consider the following pair of sentences:

Sentence 1: Many runners attempt to complete a marathon.

Sentence 2: Most of them fail to do so because they lack the necessary stamina.

Then, determine whether the statements express similar or opposing ideas, or whether one statement is the result of the other.

In this case, the second statement contradicts the first: although many runners attempt to complete a marathon, they fail because they lack sufficient stamina. As a result, a contradictor must be used.

Correct: Many runners attempt to complete a marathon, **but/yet** most fail to do so because they lack the necessary stamina.

Correct: Many runners attempt to complete a marathon; **however**, most fail to do so because they lack the necessary stamina.

Note that conjunctive adverbs, e.g., *however*, *therefore*, *consequently*, *nevertheless*, *moreover*, can also be used non-essentially (between commas) in the middle of a sentence.

In terms of meaning, this construction is **identical** to the examples above: the transitional word or phrase connects the clause in which it appears to the **previous** statement – it does not connect two parts of the same clause. Only the placement of the transition changes.

Correct: Many runners attempt to complete a marathon; most fail to do so, **however**, because they lack the necessary stamina.

Ambiguous Transitions

Some transitions can be used to indicate more than one relationship.

- *While* and *as* both indicate that two actions are occurring at the same time; however, *while* is also commonly used as a synonym for *although*, and *as* is often used as a synonym for *because*.
- *Since* can indicate how long an action has been occurring, or it can be used as a synonym for *because*.

In everyday writing, these uses are widely accepted; however, for maximum clarity and readability you should aim to use transitions that have just one, unambiguous meaning.

Ambiguous	Clear
As Since	Because
While	Although Whereas

Ambiguous: **As** rent-control laws have remained in place in New York City, rents for some apartments have remained relatively stable for decades.

Ambiguous: **Since** rent-control laws have remained in place in New York City, rents for some apartments have remained relatively stable for decades.

In the above sentences, the reader does not initially know whether the sentence will go on to describe something that happened while rent-control laws remained in place, or whether it will indicate something that occurred because rent-control laws remained in place. The meaning becomes clear enough eventually, but the reader is forced to stop and think just a little harder than necessary about what the sentence is trying to say.

Clear: **Because** rent-control laws have remained in place in New York City, rents for some apartments have remained relatively stable for decades.

In contrast to the previous version of the sentence, the use of *because* in this version immediately signals to the reader that the sentence will convey a cause-and-effect relationship.

When

Another potentially tricky conjunction is *when*.

Incorrect: Santiago's failure to complete the marathon surprised no one, least of all his training partners, **when** he had not spent enough time building the necessary stamina.

At first reading, the sentence may sound somewhat strange, but it is difficult to identify precisely why. At this point, the goal is to simplify the sentence into a more manageable form. If we consider the structure of the sentence, we notice that there are two commas in the interior of the sentence, indicating a non-essential clause. When we remove the non-essential clause, we are left with the following:

Incorrect: Santiago's failure to complete the marathon surprised no one, **when** he had not spent enough time building the necessary stamina.

Clearly, the fact that Santiago didn't complete the marathon is a result of his failure to build the necessary stamina, so a transition such as *for* or *because* is required.

Correct: Santiago's failure to complete the marathon surprised no one, least of all his training partners, **for** he had not spent enough time building the necessary stamina.

Correct: Santiago's failure to complete the marathon surprised no one, least of all his training partners, **because** he had not spent enough time building the necessary stamina.

Note, however, that the phrase *when in fact* or *when in reality* can be used to signal that something is not as it seems.

Acceptable: Santiago believed that his training regimen was adequate **when in fact** it was nothing of the sort. It was no surprise when he did not finish the marathon.

That said, *but* is a stronger, clearer option that leaves no room for guessing where the sentence is going.

Better: Santiago believed that his training regimen was adequate, **but in fact** it was nothing of the sort. It was no surprise when he did not finish the marathon.

Double Conjunction

Only one conjunction should be used to connect two consecutive clauses. If the first clause begins with a transition, the second should not begin with one as well; otherwise, a jumbled sentence is created.

Incorrect: **Although** Santiago had trained hard for the marathon, **but** he was unable to finish the entire course.

Correct: **Although** Santiago had trained hard for the marathon, he was unable to finish the entire course.

Correct: Santiago had trained hard for the marathon, **but** he was unable to finish the entire course.

Glossary of Transitions

Accordingly
Consequently



Therefore, as a result

Correct: Dolphins are social animals. **Consequently**, they live in pods of up to a dozen animals.

Correct: Dolphins are social animals. **Accordingly**, they live in pods of up to a dozen animals.

Furthermore
Moreover



In addition, what's more

Correct: Dolphins are social animals. **Furthermore**, they are highly intelligent.

Correct: Dolphins are social animals. **Moreover**, they are highly intelligent.

In fact
Indeed



Used to emphasize a preceding statement

Correct: Dolphins are highly intelligent. **In fact**, they are one of the smartest mammals.

Correct: Dolphins are highly intelligent. **Indeed**, they are one of the smartest mammals.

Even so
Still
Nevertheless



Despite this, however

Correct: Dolphins are descended from land-dwelling animals. **Nevertheless**, they can survive only in water.

Correct: Dolphins are descended from land-dwelling animals. **Even so**, they can survive only in water.

Correct: Dolphins are descended from land-dwelling animals. **Still**, they can survive only in water.

Whereas – Although

Correct: A salmon is a type of fish, **whereas** a dolphin is a type of mammal.

As such – *As a(n) + noun*

As such is one of the trickier transitions, and it's best explained with an example.

Let's start with this sentence:

Correct: Dolphins are social animals. **Because** they are social animals, they live in pods of up to a dozen animals.

We can also write it this way:

Correct: Dolphins are social animals. **As** social animals, they live in pods of up to a dozen animals.

These sentences are fine grammatically, but the repetition of the phrase *social animals* in the second sentence is awkward. To eliminate the repetition, we can replace the phrase *as social animals* with *as such*.

Correct: Dolphins are social animals. **As such**, they live in pods of up to a dozen animals.

Likewise – Similarly, in the same way

Correct: As mammals, dolphins are warm blooded. **Likewise**, they nourish their young with milk.

Meanwhile – At the same time; often used as a synonym for *however*, to indicate a contrast

Correct: Many people think of dolphins as fish. **Meanwhile**, they ignore scientific research, which long ago established that dolphins are actually mammals.

Subsequently – Then, afterward

Correct: In the 1980s, dolphin populations began to decline because too many animals were caught in fishing nets. **Subsequently**, fishing companies began taking steps to reassure customers that products were "dolphin safe."

That is – In other words; provides a definition or explanation, and often follows a dash.

Correct: Dolphins are mammals – **that is**, they are warm blooded and nourish their young with milk.

Exercise: Transitions

For the following exercises, determine whether the underlined transition word creates a logical relationship; if it does not, provide an appropriate alternative. Some of the sentences may not contain an error.

1. In the past, coffees were blended and branded to suit a homogenous popular taste, and that has recently changed in response to a growing awareness of regional differences.

Correction: _____

2. People living cities tend to eat more processed foods than those living in rural areas; consequently, city-dwellers experience higher rates of health problems.

Correction: _____

3. The Taj Mahal is regarded as one of the eight wonders of the world, although some historians have noted that its architectural beauty has never been surpassed.

Correction: _____

4. Music serves no obvious evolutionary purpose; it has, nevertheless, played a role in every known civilization on earth.

Correction: _____

5. There is no escaping the fact that most of the world's big cats are in serious trouble because of poaching, and tigers are no exception to this situation.

Correction: _____

6. Although saving an endangered species requires preservationists to study it in detail, but unfortunately scientific information about some animals is scarce.

Correction: _____

7. No one truly knows where the pirate known as Blackbeard called home; indeed, author Daniel Defoe, a self-appointed piracy expert, claimed that he came from the English city of Bristol.

Correction: _____

8. The correlation between bad moods and negative judgments is useful whereas it allows people to make informed guesses about how others are feeling from observing their actions and choices.

Correction: _____

9. Since Frederic Chopin's charming and sociable personality drew loyal groups of friends and admirers, including the novelist George Sand, his private life was often painful and difficult.

Correction: _____

10. Pyramids are most commonly associated with ancient Egypt, so it comes as a surprise to many people that Nubian civilization, located in modern-day Sudan, produced far more pyramids than Egyptian civilization ever did.

Correction: _____

11. The two books recount the same series of events; therefore, they do so from different perspectives and are not intended to be read in any particular order.

Correction: _____

12. Roman women could only exercise political power through men, the only people considered true citizens, for they were not allowed to participate directly in politics.

Correction: _____

13. Thomas Jefferson believed that prisoners of war should be treated humanely; however, during the American Revolution, he requested that British and Hessian generals be held in private homes rather than behind bars.

Correction: _____

14. Modern chemistry keeps insects from ravaging crops, lifts stains from carpets, and saves lives, and the constant exposure to chemicals is taking a toll on many people's health.

Correction: _____

15. Because the lemur shares some traits with other primates, it is frequently mistaken for an ancestor of modern monkeys and apes.

Correction: _____

Answers: Transitions

For the following exercises, determine whether the underlined transition word creates a logical relationship; if it does not, provide an appropriate alternative. Some of the sentences may not contain an error.

1. In the past, coffees were blended and branded to suit a homogenous popular taste, but that has recently changed in response to a growing awareness of regional differences.
2. Correct
3. The Taj Mahal is regarded as one of the eight wonders of the world, and some historians have noted that its architectural beauty has never been surpassed.
4. Correct
5. Correct
6. **Although** saving an endangered species requires preservationists to study it in detail, but unfortunately scientific information about some animals is scarce.
7. No one truly knows where the pirate known as Blackbeard called home; however, author Daniel Defoe, a self-appointed piracy expert, claimed that he came from the English city of Bristol.
8. The correlation between bad moods and negative judgments is useful because it allows people to make informed guesses about how others are feeling from observing their actions and choices.
9. Although Frederic Chopin's charming and sociable personality drew loyal groups of friends and admirers, including the novelist George Sand, his private life was often painful and difficult.
10. Correct
11. The two books recount the same series of events; however, they do so from different perspectives and are not intended to be read in any particular order.
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13. Thomas Jefferson believed that prisoners of war should be treated humanely; therefore, during the American Revolution, he requested that British and Hessian generals be held in private homes rather than behind bars.

14. Modern chemistry keeps insects from ravaging crops, lifts stains from carpets, and saves lives, but the constant exposure to chemicals is taking a toll on many people's health.
15. Correct