

Coherence: Transitions Between Ideas

Unless readers can move easily from one thought to another, they will feel confused. This is why we provide transitions between ideas. You should not assume that your readers know what you know. It's better to assume that your readers need you to tell them how to connect the pieces of information you are giving them. There are four basic mechanical considerations in providing transitions between ideas: using transitional expressions, repeating key words and phrases, using pronoun reference, and using parallel form.

Transitional Tags

Transitional tags may be simple, like the little conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *nor*, *for*, *yet*, *or*, (and sometimes) *so*. Or they may be complex — the conjunctive adverbs and transitional expressions such as *however*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, *on the other hand*. Below is a chart of the transitional devices (also called **conjunctive adverbs** or **adverbial conjunctions**)

addition	again, also, and, and then, besides, equally important, finally, first, further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, last, moreover, next, second, still, too
comparison	also, in the same way, likewise, similarly
concession	granted, naturally, of course
contrast	although, and yet, at the same time, but at the same time, despite that, even so, even though, for all that, however, in contrast, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the other hand, otherwise, regardless, still, though, yet
emphasis	certainly, indeed, in fact, of course
example or illustration	after all, as an illustration, even, for example, for instance, in conclusion, indeed, in fact, in other words, in short, it is true, of course, namely, specifically, that is, to illustrate, thus, truly
summary	all in all, altogether, as has been said, finally, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in short, in simpler terms, in summary, on the whole, that is, therefore, to put it differently, to summarize
time sequence	after a while, afterward, again, also, and then, as long as, at last, at length, at that time, before, besides, earlier, eventually, finally, formerly, further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, in the past, last, lately, meanwhile, moreover, next, now, presently, second, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, still, subsequently, then, thereafter, too, until, until now, when

Repetition of Key Words and Phrases

The ability to connect ideas by means of repetition of key words and phrases sometimes meets a natural resistance based on the fear of being repetitive. They help a reader's comprehension of a piece. Unless it is overworked and obtrusive, repetition lends itself to a sense of coherence (or at least to the illusion of coherence).

Pronoun Reference

Pronouns quite naturally connect ideas because pronouns almost always refer the reader to something earlier in the text. I cannot say "This is true because . . ." without causing the reader to consider what "this" could mean. Thus, the pronoun causes the reader to sum up, quickly and subconsciously, what was said before (what *this* is) before going on to the *because* part of my reasoning. It must always be perfectly clear what a pronoun refers to. Do not rely on unclear pronoun references to avoid responsibility: "They say that . . ."

Cohesion: linking words and phrases

You can use words and phrases to guide your reader by linking sentences and paragraphs. Good use will make what you have written easy to follow; bad use might mean your style is disjointed, and consequently difficult to follow.

Listing	Giving examples	Generalising
first, second, third	for example	in general
first, furthermore, finally	for instance	generally
to begin, to conclude	as follows:	on the whole
next	that is	as a rule
Reinforcement	in this case	for the most part
also	namely	in most cases
furthermore	in other words	usually
moreover	Result/consequence	Highlighting
what is more	so	in particular
in addition	therefore	particularly
besides	as a result/consequence	especially
above all	accordingly	mainly
as well (as)	consequently	Reformulation
in the same way	because of this/that	in other words
not only ... but also	thus	rather
Similarity	hence	to put it more simply
equally	for this/that reason	Expressing an alternative
likewise	so that	alternatively
similarly	in that case	rather
correspondingly	under these circumstances	on the other hand
in the same way	Deduction	the alternative is
Transition to new point	then	another possibility would be
now,	in other words	Contrast
as far as x is concerned	in that case	instead
with regard/reference to	otherwise	conversely
as for ...	this implies that ...	on the contrary
it follows that	if so/not	in contrast
turning to	Stating the obvious	in comparison
Summary	obviously	Concession
in conclusion	clearly	however
to conclude	naturally	even though
in brief	of course	however much
to summarise	as can be expected	nevertheless
overall	surely	still
therefore	after all	yet