

## #2) Transitions

(adapted from The St. Martin's Guide to Writing, 4th ed., by Rise B. Axelrod and Charles R. Cooper)

A transition, sometimes called a connective, serves as a bridge, connecting one paragraph, sentence, clause, or word with another. Not only does a transition signal a connection, it also identifies the kind of connection by indicating to readers how the idea preceding the transition relates to that which follows it. Transitions help readers anticipate how the next paragraph or sentence will affect the meaning of what they have just read. Following is a discussion of three basic groups of transitions, based on the relationships they indicate: logical, temporal, and spatial.

### Logical Relationships

Transitions help readers follow the logic of an argument. How such transitions work is illustrated in this tightly--and passionately--reasoned paragraph by James Baldwin:

The black man insists, whatever means he finds at his disposal, that the white man cease to regard him as an exotic rarity and recognize him as a human being. This is a very charged and difficult moment, for there is a great deal of will power involved in the white man's naiveté. Most people are not naturally malicious, and the white man prefers to keep the black man at a certain human remove because it is easier for him thus to preserve his simplicity and to avoid being called to account for crimes committed by his forefathers, or his neighbors. He is inescapably aware, nevertheless, that he is in a better position in the world than black men are, nor can he quite put to death the suspicion that he is hated by black men therefore. He does not wish to be hated, neither does he wish to change places, and at this point in his uneasiness he can scarcely avoid having recourse to those legends which white men have created about black men, the most unusual effect of which is that the white man finds himself enmeshed, so to speak, in his own language which describes hell, as well as the attributes which lead one to hell, as being black as night.

--James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village"

### Transitions Showing Logical Relationships

*To introduce an illustration or other specification:* in particular; specifically; for instance; for example; that is; namely

*To introduce a result or a cause:* consequently; as a result, hence; accordingly; thus; so; therefore; then; because; since; for

*To introduce a restatement:* that is; in other words; in simpler terms; to put it differently

*To introduce a conclusion or summary:* in conclusion; finally; all in all; evidently; clearly; actually; to sum up; altogether; of course

*To introduce an opposing view:* but; however; yet; nevertheless; on the contrary; on the other hand; in contrast; still; neither...nor

*To introduce a concession to an opposing view:* certainly; naturally; of course; it is true; to be sure; granted

*To resume the original line of reasoning after a concession:* nonetheless; all the same; even though; still; nevertheless

*To introduce another item in a series:* first, second; in the second place; for one thing...for another; next; then; furthermore; moreover; in addition; finally; last; also; similarly; besides; and; as well as

### Temporal Relationships

In addition to showing logical connections, transitions indicate sequence or progression in time (temporal relationships), as this example illustrates:

That night, we drank tea and then vodka with lemon peel steeped in it. The four of us talked in Russian and English about mutual friends and American railroads and the Rolling Stones. Seryozha loves the Stones, and his face grew wistful as we spoke about their recent album, "Some Girls." He played a tape of "Let It Bleed" over and over, until we could translate some difficult phrases for him; after that, he came out with the phrases at intervals during the evening, in a pretty decent imitation of Jagger's Cockney snarl. He was an adroit and oddly formal host, inconspicuously filling our teacups and politely urging us to eat bread and cheese and chocolate. While he talked to us, he teased Anya, calling her "Piglet," and she shook back her bangs and glowered at him. It was clear that theirs was a fiery relationship. After a while, we talked about ourselves. Anya told us about painting and printmaking and about how hard it was to buy supplies in Moscow. There had been something angry in her dark face since the beginning of the evening; I thought at first that it meant she didn't like Americans; but now I realized that it was a constant, barely suppressed rage at her own situation.

### **Temporal Transitions**

*To indicate frequency:* frequently; hourly; often; occasionally; now and then; day after day; again and again

*To indicate duration:* during; briefly; for a time; minute by minute.

*To indicate the beginning:* at first; in the beginning; since; before then

*To indicate the middle:* in the meantime; meanwhile; as it was happening; at that moment; at the same time; simultaneously; next; then

*To indicate the end and beyond:* eventually; finally; at last; in the end; subsequently; later; afterwards

*To indicate a particular time:* now; then; at that time; in those days; last Sunday; next Christmas; in 1995; at the beginning of August; at six o'clock; first thing in the morning; two months ago

### **Spatial Relationships**

Spatial transitions orient readers to the objects in a scene, as illustrated in this paragraph:

On Georgia 155, I crossed Troublesome Creek, then went through groves of pecan trees aligned one with the next like fenceposts. The pastures grew a green almost blue, and syrupy water the color of a dusty sunset filled the ponds. Around the farmhouses, from wires strung high above the ground, swayed gourds hollowed out for purple martins.

The land rose again on the other side of the Chattahoochee River, and Highway 34 went to the ridgetops where long views over the hills opened in all directions. Here was the tail of the Appalachian backbone, its gradual descent to the Gulf. Near the Alabama stateline stood a couple of LAST CHANCE! bars.

--William Least Heat Moon, Blue Highways

### **Transitions Showing Spatial Relationships**

*To indicate closeness:* close to; near; next to; alongside; adjacent to; facing

*To indicate distance:* in the distance; far; beyond; away; there

*To indicate direction:* up or down; sideways; along; across; to the right or left; in front of or behind; above or below; inside or outside

### **Transitions and Topic Sentences**

Not all topic sentences simply point forward to what will follow. Some also refer back to earlier sentences. Such sentences work both as topic sentences, stating the main point of the paragraph, and as transitions, linking that paragraph to a previous one. Here are a few topic sentences from "Quilts and Women's Culture" by Elaine Hedges that use specific transitions (underscored) to tie the sentence to a previous statement:

With its broad traditionalism and anonymity, however, variations and distinctions developed.

Regionally, distinctions were introduced into quilt making through the interesting process of renaming.

With equal inventiveness women renamed traditional patterns to accommodate to the local landscape.

Finally, out of such regional and other variations come individual, signed achievements.

Quilts, then, were an outlet for creative energy, a source and emblem of sisterhood and solidarity, and a graphic response to historical and political change.

Sometimes the first sentence serves as a transition, while a subsequent sentence--in this case the last--states the topic. The underscored sentences illustrate this strategy in the following example:

What a convenience, what a relief it will be, they say, never to worry about how to dress for a job interview, a romantic tryst, or a funeral!

Convenient perhaps, but not exactly a relief, Such a utopia would give most of us the same kind of chill we feel when a stadium full of Communist-bloc athletes in identical sports outfits, shouting slogans in unison, appears on TV. Most people do not want to be told what to wear any more than they want to be told what to say. In Belfast recently four hundred Irish Republican prisoners refused to wear any clothes at all, draping themselves day and night in blankets, rather than put on prison uniforms. Even the offer of civilian-style dress did not satisfy them; they insisted on wearing their own clothes brought from home, or nothing. Fashion is free speech, and one of the privileges, if not always one of the pleasures, of a free world.

--Alison Lurie, The Language of Clothes

Occasionally, whole paragraphs serve as transitions, linking one sequence of paragraphs with those that follow. See how the next transitional paragraph summarizes what came before (evidence of contrast) and sets up what will follow (evidence of similarity):

Yet it was not all contrast; after all, different as they were--in background, in personality, in underlying aspiration--these two great soldiers had much in common. Under everything else, they were marvelous fighters. Furthermore, their fighting qualities were really very much alike.

--Bruce Catton, "Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts"

### Transitional Words and Phrases—A Quick List

#### 1. Transitions that add, repeat, or emphasize:

and	further	finally
also	furthermore	after all
in addition	moreover	first, second,
besides	indeed	to conclude
too	in fact	to sum up
in other words	as a result	accordingly
again	nevertheless	in the end

#### 2. Transitions that compare:

similarly	like	in comparison
again	also	in the same way
likewise	once more	

#### 3. Transitions that contrast:

although	but	despite
even though	however	in contrast
in spite of	instead	nevertheless
nonetheless	on the contrary	on the one hand
on the other hand	regardless	still
though	yet	unlike
whereas	rather than	

#### 4. Transitions that show a time or space relationship:

before	earlier	alongside	now
next	now	between	at first
afterwards	in time	later	at last
finally	eventually	ever since	then
until	soon	the following	across
during	still	day/night	over
within	meanwhile	beyond	from...to

#### 5. Transitions that limit or prepare for an example:

if	that is	unless	namely
when	for example	for instance	to illustrate
in case	such as	in particular	provided that

#### 6. Transitions that signal cause or result:

because	thus	for	as a result
so	consequently	therefore	for this reason

#### 7. Transitions that assert a truth or acknowledge opposition:

no doubt	of course	in fact	naturally
doubtless	granted that	certainly	conceding that
surely	without a doubt		