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Effective Transition Terms in Academic Papers

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The Most Common Transitions Found in Research Papers

What do transitions do?

A transition is a change from one idea to another idea in writing or speaking and can be achieved using transition terms or phrases. These are most often placed at the beginning of sentences, independent clauses, and paragraphs and thus establish a specific relationship between ideas or groups of ideas. Transitions are used to create “flow” in your paper and make its logical development clearer to readers.

Categories of Transitions

Transitions accomplish many different objectives. We can divide all transitions into four basic categories:

- Additive transitions** signal to the reader that you are adding or referencing information
- Adversative transitions** indicate conflict or disagreement between pieces of information
- Causal transitions** point to consequences and show cause-and-effect relationships
- Sequential transitions** clarify order and sequence of information and the overall structure of the paper

Additive Transitions

These terms signal that new information is being added (between both sentences and paragraphs); introduce or highlight information; refer to something that was just mentioned; add similar situation; or identify certain information as important.

Purpose	Common Terms	Common Phrases	Examples in Research Writing
Adding Information	Also; Additionally; Furthermore; Moreover	In addition to; As well as; In fact; Not only...but also; As a matter of fact	<i>"Furthermore, the data shows that X is a significant factor." "In addition to the above-mentioned study, Rogers also presents..."</i>
Introducing/Highlighting	Particularly; Notably; Especially	For example/instance; To illustrate; In particular; One example (of this is)	<i>"Notably, only two species of this fish survive." "One example of this phenomenon is X."</i>
Referencing	Considering (this); Concerning (this); Regarding (this)	As for (this); The fact that; With regards to (this); On the subject of (this); Looking at (this information)	<i>"Considering the amount of research in this area, little evidence has been found." "With regards to the Blue Whale, its teeth are also the largest of any mammal."</i>
Showing Similarity	Similarly; Likewise; Equally	By the same token; In the same way; In a similar way	<i>"Likewise, the algorithm was applied to Y." "By the same token, this principle can be applied to Z."</i>
Clarifying/Identifying Important Information	Specifically; Namely	That is (to say); In other words; (To) put (it) another way; What this means is; This means (that)	<i>"There are two factors: namely, X and Y." "In other words, the fall of the Empire was caused by over-expansion."</i>

Adversative Transitions

These terms and phrases distinguish facts, arguments, and other information, whether by contrasting and showing differences; by conceding points or making counterarguments; by dismissing the importance of a fact or argument; or replacing and suggesting alternatives.

Purpose	Common Terms	Common Phrases	Examples in Research Writing
Contrasting/ Showing conflict	But; Still; However; While; Whereas; Conversely; (and) yet	In contrast; On the contrary; On the other hand; ...when in fact; By way of contrast	<i>"However, there is still more research needed." "On the other hand, the 1997 study does not recognize these outcomes."</i>
Distinguishing/ Emphasizing	Indeed; Besides; Significantly; Primarily	Even more; Above all; More/Most importantly	<i>"Indeed, a placebo is essential to any pharmaceutical study." "Most importantly, the X enzyme increased."</i>
Conceding a point	Nevertheless; Nonetheless; Although; Despite (this); However; Regardless (of this); Admittedly	Even so; Even though; In spite of (this); Notwithstanding (this); Be that as it may	<i>"Nevertheless, X is still an important factor." "In spite of this fact, New York still has a high standard of living." "Although this may be true, there are still other factors to consider."</i>
Dismissing an argument or assertion	Regardless (of)	Either way; In any case; In any event; Whatever happens; All the same; At any rate	<i>"Regardless of the result, this fact is true." "Either way, the effect is the same." "In any event, this will not change the public's view."</i>
Replacing/ Indicating an Alternative	Instead (of); (or) rather;	(or) at least	<i>"Instead of using X, the scientists used Z." "Or rather, why not implement a brand new policy?"</i>

Causal Transitions

These terms and phrases signal the reasons, conditions, purposes, circumstances, and cause-and-effect relationships. These transitions often come after an important point in the paper has been established or to explore hypothetical relationships or circumstances.

Purpose	Common Terms	Common Phrases	Examples in Research Writing
Showing Cause or Reason	Since; For; As; Because (of the fact that)	Due to (the fact that); For the reason that; Owing to (the fact); Inasmuch as	<i>"Since the original sample group was too small, researchers called for more participants." "Due to budgetary demands, funding will be cut in half."</i>
Explaining the Conditions	If...then; Unless; Granting (that); Granted (that); Provided (that)	In the event that; As/So long as; Only if	<i>"Unless these conditions change, more will need to be done." "As long as there is oxygen, there will be oxygenation."</i>
Showing the Effects/Results	Consequently; Therefore; Thus; Accordingly; Because (of this)	As a result (of this); For this reason; As a consequence; So much (so) that	<i>"Therefore, we can conclude that this was an asymmetric catalysis." "As a consequence, many consumers began to demand safer products."</i>
Showing the Purpose		For the purpose(s) of; With (this fact) in mind; In the hope that; In order that/to; So as to	<i>"For the purpose of following standards, X rule was observed." "With the current state of pandas in mind, this study focused on preservation."</i>

Highlighting the Importance of Circumstances	Otherwise	Under those circumstances; That being the case; In that case; If so; All else being equal	<i>"Otherwise, this effect will continue into the future." "All else being equal, the economic impact of this law seems positive."</i>
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Sequential Transitions

These transition terms and phrases organize your paper by numerical sequence; by showing continuation in thought or action; by referring to previously-mentioned information; by indicating digressions; and, finally, by concluding and summing up your paper. Sequential transitions are essential to creating structure and helping the reader understand the logical development through your paper's methods, results, and analysis.

Purpose	Common Terms	Common Phrases	Examples in Research Writing
Organizing by Number	Initially; Secondly; Thirdly; (First/Second/Third); Last	First of all; To start with; In the (first/second/third) place	<i>"Initially, subjects were asked to write their names." "First of all, dolphins are the smartest creatures in the sea."</i>
Showing Continuation	Subsequently; Previously; Afterwards; Eventually; Next; After (this)		<i>"Subsequently, subjects were taken to their rooms." "Afterwards, they were asked about their experiences."</i>
Summarizing/ Repeating Information	(Once) again; Summarizing (this)	To repeat; As (was) stated before; As (was) mentioned earlier/above	<i>"Summarizing this data, it becomes evident that there is a pattern." "As mentioned earlier, pollution has become an increasing problem."</i>
Digression/Resumption	Incidentally; Coincidentally; Anyway	By the way; to resume; Returning to the subject; At any rate	<i>"Coincidentally, the methods used in the two studies were similar." "Returning to the subject, this section will analyze the results."</i>
Concluding/ Summarizing	Thus; Hence; Ultimately; Finally; Therefore; Altogether; Overall; Consequently	To conclude; As a final point; In conclusion; Given these points; In summary; To sum up	<i>"Ultimately, these results will be valuable to the study of X." "In conclusion, there are three things to keep in mind—A, B, and C."</i>

How to Choose Your Transitions

Transitions are commonplace elements in writing, but they are also powerful tools that can be abused or misapplied if one isn't careful. Here are some ways to ensure you are using transitions effectively.

Check for overused, awkward, or absent transitions when you are reading through and/or editing your paper. Don't spend too much time trying to find the "perfect" transition while writing the paper.

When you find a place where a transition could connect ideas, establish relationships, and make it easier for the reader to understand your point, use the list to find a suitable transition term or phrase.

Similarly, if you have repeated some terms again and again, find a substitute transition from the list and use that instead. This will help vary your writing and enhance communication of ideas.

Read the beginning of each paragraph. Did you include a transition? If not, look at the information in that paragraph and of the preceding paragraph and ask yourself: "How does this information connect?" Then locate the best transition from the list.

Check the structure of your paper—are your ideas clearly laid out in order? You should be able to locate sequence terms such as "first," "second," "following this," "another," "in addition," "finally," "in conclusion," etc. These terms will help outline your paper for the reader.

For more helpful information on academic writing and the journal publication process, visit Wordvice's **Resources** (www.wordvice.com/blog) Page. And be sure to check out our **YouTube channel** (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4cP29kdzpgBGZ8NbOHhKXg>) to stay up to date with the latest videos and online lectures.

Wordvice Resources

"How to Write the Best Journal Submissions Cover Letter" (<https://wordvice.com/journal-submission-cover-letter/>)

"100+ Strong Verbs That Will Make Your Research Writing Amazing" (<https://wordvice.com/recommended-verbs-for-research-writing/>)

"How to Write an Abstract" (<https://wordvice.com/how-to-write-a-research-paper-abstract/>)

"Which Tense to Use in Your Abstract" (<https://wordvice.com/which-tense-should-be-used-in-abstracts-past-or-present/>)

"Active and Passive Voice in Research Papers" (<https://wordvice.com/video-should-i-use-active-or-passive-voice-in-a-research-paper/>)

"Common Phrases Used in Academic Writing" (<https://wordvice.com/useful-phrases-for-writing-academic-papers/>)

Wordvice YouTube Videos

"How to Write a Research Paper Introduction" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTC-5P1VFFU>)

"Which Verb Tenses to Use in a Research Paper." (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcuL_IaRtXc)

Other Resources Around the Web

MSU Writing Center. *Transition Words*. (<https://msu.edu/~jdowell/135/transw.html>)

UW-Madison Writing Center. *Transition Words and Phrases*. (<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Transitions.html>)

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Kevin H.

Kevin H. is a seasoned academic lecturer and editor of research papers.

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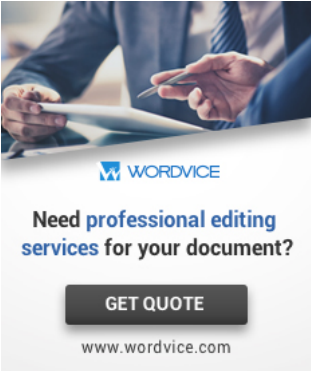
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