

Transitions

HIS101

Types of Transitions

- Within or between sentences
 - A word or phrase
- Between paragraphs
 - A word or phrase
- Between sections
 - A phrase or sentence summarizing information

5 Things That Transitions Do

1. Help readers understand relevance of one part of argument
2. Help readers anticipate what is coming
3. Highlight logic, pattern of argument
4. Reinforce links and establish coherence
5. Emphasize relationship between ideas in an argument

10 Common Transitional Expressions

1. **Similarity**

Also, in the same way, just as, so too, likewise, similarly

2. **Exception/Contrast**

But, however, in spite of, on the one hand, on the other hand, nevertheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet

3. **Sequence/Order**

First, second, third, next, then, finally

4. **Time**

After, at last, before, currently, during, earlier, immediately, later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then

5. **Example**

For example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate

10 Common Transitional Expressions con't

6. Emphasis

Even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly

7. Place/Position

Above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there

8. Cause and Effect

Accordingly, consequently, hence, so, therefore, thus

9. Additional support or Evidence

Additionally, again, also, and , as well, besides, equally important, further, in addition, moreover, then

10. Conclusion/Summary

Finally, in brief, briefly, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in summary

Implied Transitions Between and Within Paragraphs

- Use pronoun, demonstrative adjective or other word/phrase that refers to the previous sentence or paragraph
 - Be cautious when using “this” or “it”
- End a paragraph with a claim, start next paragraph with an example to illustrate that claim
- Repeat a key word from the preceding paragraph or sentence
- Use an alternate word
 - “Smith’s book shows...His work was well-received.”
- Remind the readers of your thesis

Implied Transitions Between Paragraphs

End of one paragraph

When **Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee** met in the parlor of a modest house at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, a great chapter in American life came to a close.

Beginning of next paragraph

These men were bringing the Civil War to its virtual finish.

- The demonstrative adjective “these” modifies “men (the subject of the topic sentence) so that it refers to a noun in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph

Identify the Transitions. Is this Effective?

. . . In his account of picturesque Greece, Pausanias says that in Arabia vipers build their nests around balsam trees and have to be driven away with sticks in order for the plants' precious resin to be collected.⁴ Pausanias is unusual in offering a reason why snakes patrol the plants: the vipers favor balsam above all other food. As it happens, according to Pausanias, balsam requires less heroic methods to obtain than the spices mentioned by Herodotus: even if the viper attacks, its bite is not poisonous because the diet of balsam has exerted a benign and soothing influence.

Venerable though it was, the idea that serpents surround and therefore impede the harvest of fragrant plants was not universally accepted. Pliny, not usually credited with skepticism about marvels, ridiculed Herodotus's accounts . . .

Paul Freedman, "Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value," *Speculum* 80.4 (2005): 1210.

Here are the transitions

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Sample 1 with Highlighted Transitions

. . . The rarity of pepper according to Isidore of Seville is not absolute (**after all**, the serpents watch over entire pepper silvae) **but** circumstantial. There is plenty of pepper in India, **but** its acquisition involves danger and requires labor and skill. A modern example of absolute rarity is the truffle, which is difficult to find and has a very limited habitat. Saffron, **on the other hand**, is a reasonably common plant that will grow in many climates, **but** the delicate stigmas of the flower require tremendous effort to collect. Saffron **is rare and expensive** because of the circumstances of its harvesting.

Not everything that is rare, however, is expensive. Mastic, a resinous gum, is produced by plants that grow only on the Aegean island of Chios.¹³ Used as a medicine and cosmetic in the Middle Ages, mastic was at that time . . .

Paul Freedman, "Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value," *Speculum*, 80.4 (2005): 1212.

Sample 2 with Highlighted Transitions

... There is little market for it, **and so rare** though it may be, its relative **price is now incomparably lower** than in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

Conversely, certain things are not all that **rare but** nevertheless very **expensive**. The fashion industry depends on an appearance of exclusivity coupled with ample supply. . .

Paul Freedman, "Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value," *Speculum*, 80.4 (2005): 1212.

Sample 3 with Highlighted Transitions

... His description accounts for the status of Egypt as an entrepot for spices **but also** points to the disparity between the great cost of these spices when "sold to us" and their actual ease of acquisition. **Yet even though** the spices in Joinville are simple to gather, there is a certain intrinsic limitation in a supply . . .

There were, **therefore**, different theories about the nature and circumstances of the wealth of the East. The wonderful products of Asia may be rare or at least difficult to acquire even in the place of their origin, **as** the story of the dangerous pepper orchards implies. **Alternatively** Asia might be rich because of the industry of its people and beneficent government, **as** in Marco Polo's China. It could be extravagantly rich **but** closely governed **as** with Prester John or the court of the Great Khan. **Finally**, it may be a place of grotesque and effortless wealth on the order of the golden roofs of Cipangu.

Paul Freedman, "Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value," *Speculum*, 80.4 (2005): 1224.

Sample 3 Without Transitions

. . . His description accounts for the status of Egypt as an entrepot for spices. His description points to the disparity between the great cost of these spices when "sold to us" and their actual ease of acquisition. The spices in Joinville are simple to gather. There is a certain intrinsic limitation in a supply . . .

There were different theories about the nature and circumstances of the wealth of the East. The wonderful products of Asia may be rare. They may be difficult to acquire even in the place of their origin. The story of the dangerous pepper orchards implies this. Asia might be rich because of the industry of its people and beneficent government. Marco Polo's China is rich because of the industry of its people and its benevolent government. Asia could be extravagantly rich and closely governed. Prester John or the court of the Great Khan are rich but closely governed. Asia may be a place of grotesque and effortless wealth on the order of the golden roofs of Cipangu.

Paul Freedman, "Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value," *Speculum*, 80.4 (2005): 1224.

Sample 4 with Highlighted Transitions

... an opinion shared by the poet Eustache Deschamps, who complained about rural inns where one could eat only coarse peasant comestibles such as leeks or cabbage, all flavored with black pepper.²⁸ **Notwithstanding** such remarks, pepper enjoyed the status of a necessary luxury throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, an expensive condiment, **but** one within reach of a substantial proportion of the population. **However** cheap pepper was **in comparison with** other aromatic products, it accounted for a great share of the profits of the spice trade. **Above all,** pepper remained in very great demand.

Paul Freedman, "Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value," *Speculum*, 80.4 (2005): 1215.

Use Caution with Transitions!

- Use transitional expressions sparingly
- Conjunctive adverbs and most transitional expressions modify the previous sentence, but not the entire argument
- Without a good reason for the sequence of your paragraphs, no transition will help you
- Conceptual links are more important than conjunctive adverbs/transitional expressions
 - Transitional expressions exist to make these conceptual links explicit

Use the Old to New Principle to Make Strings of Sentences Cohesive

“Fascination with the origins of imported aromatic substances and the supposed **peril of gathering them** were commonplaces of the classical tradition. Herodotus describes the **difficulties attending the collection** of several **fragrant products**. **Frankincense** is guarded by snakes; **cassia** is patrolled by winged batlike creatures ...”

Text tied to the “peril of gathering” aromatic substances

Text tied to “fragrant products”

Refer Back to the Topic Sentence to Make Coherent Paragraphs

“The **rarity of pepper** according to Isidore of Seville is not **absolute** ... but circumstantial. There is plenty of **pepper** in India, but its acquisition involves danger and requires labour and skill. A modern example of **absolute rarity** is the truffle, which is difficult to find has a very limited habitat. Saffron, on the other hand, is a **reasonably common** plant that will grow in many climates, but the delicate stigmas of the flower require tremendous effort to collect. Saffron is **rare** and expensive because of the circumstances of its harvesting.

The rare-to-common continuum is set up throughout the paragraph

“Pepper” is repeated as a unifying element

“Absolute” is repeated as a unifying element

Clicker Question!

Transitions are important to:

- A. Help the reader understand the irrelevance of one part of your argument
- B. Help the reader anticipate what came before
- C. Highlight the logic and pattern of argument in an essay
- D. Emphasize relationships among ideas in an argument
- E. C and D