Transitions: Building Bridges between Ideas

Imagine two concrete, information packed paragraphs sitting on opposite sides of waterfall. The easiest way to get to the second paragraph is by going straight across the rushing water. You, as a writer, are challenged to guide your reader from one sentence to the other without losing them to treacherous rapids. You will need to create a well-built bridge that they can follow to the next idea. In effective writing, bridges are referred to as transitions. Transitions are links between ideas, sentences and paragraphs. They help your reader move easily from one thought to the next as well as ensure that they stay interested in your topic. Remember, bridge building takes practice and it may take a couple of tries to figure out the type of bridge that works best for connecting your ideas.

1. Practical Suggestions:
   - Read the last sentence of your paragraphs. Ask yourself, “What does my reader expect to hear next?” If your next paragraph does not meet those expectations it is probably time to look at the way you have organized your paper and the transitions between your ideas.
   - When checking your paper for clear transitions, don’t assume that your reader knows what you know. You need to write out and explain what may seem like an obvious connection for you.
   - Make sure the transitions belong where you place them. Reading the transitional sentence along with the surrounding sentences out loud is good way to know if they fit snugly in place.
   - If you get stuck on how to write a transition, try repeating an idea from the last sentence of your previous paragraph in the first sentence of the following paragraph.

2. Resources/More Information:
   - http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/transitions.htm
   - http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_transition.html

The following list of transitional words and phrases can be a useful tool when constructing your bridges. However, do not assume that just because you use one of these words, you have an effective transition. Remember, the idea is what makes a transition, not simply using a word like “furthermore.”
### Addition
- again
- and then
- also
- in addition
- furthermore

### Exception
- yet
- still
- however
- despite

### Time
- while
- after
- never
- always
- whenever

### Compare/Contrast
- whereas
- but
- yet
- however
- similarly
- likewise
- in contrast

### Exemplification
- for example
- for instance
- specifically

### Prove
- because
- since
- obviously
- furthermore
- moreover

### Repetition
- in brief
- as I have said

### Emphasize
- definitely
- extremely
- obviously
- in fact
- absolutely

### Clarification
- to explain
- to clarify
- to rephrase

### Show Sequence
- first, second, etc.
- A,B,C, etc.
- next
- then
- following this
- at this time
- finally

### Summary/Conclusion
- in brief
- to conclude
- in conclusion
- finally
- as I have shown
- as I have said

### Cause/Effect
- because
- since
- on account of
- for that reason
- therefore