Transitions: Building Bridges Between Ideas

Effective paragraphs generally focus on one main idea fully and completely. As such, two paragraphs next to each other in a paper might not have much in common, which can make for a difficult segue for the reader. In order to assist the reader in understanding how the two ideas link, writers need to use effective transitions.

1. Practical Suggestions:
   • **Anticipate Expectations**: Read the last sentence of each 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 transition between your ideas.

   • **State Connections**: 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.

   • **Hear the Transitions**: Make sure the transitions belong where you place them. Reading the transitional sentence out loud along with the surrounding sentences is good way to know if they fit correctly.

   • **Use Repetition**: 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. If you think the repetition feels redundant, try using a synonym for a key noun or verb.

   • **Use Transition Words**: Transition words are often an effective way to connect paragraphs. 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.” Also, be cautious not to begin every paragraph with one of these words.

The following list of transitional words and phrases can be a useful tool when constructing your bridges.
### Addition
- again
- and then
- also
- in addition
- furthermore

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

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

### Compare/Contrast
- but
- yet
- however
- in contrast

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

### Prove
- because
- since
- evidently
- similarly

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

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

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

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

### Cause/Effect
- because
- since
- on account of

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For further information on related concepts, please see the following handouts:
- Known-New Contract
- MEAL Handout