USING TRANSITIONS

Using transitional words and phrases help papers read more smoothly by providing coherence. A coherent paper allows the reader to flow from the first supporting point to the last. Transitions indicate relationships, whether from sentence to sentence, or from paragraph to paragraph.

Here are three types of transitions to use. Focus on Type One and Type Two.

TYPE ONE: SYNONYMS

The use of synonyms or substitute words to echo important words in sentences is also an effective transitional device. In the following paragraph, the synonyms or substitute words are underlined.

> Taking unnecessary risks used to appeal to Uncle Will in his younger and wilder days. In fact, he used to go out of his way to find dangerous obstacles to overcome. Now, however, the very thought of taking such chances makes him shudder.

TYPE TWO: REPETITION OF KEY WORDS OR IDEAS

The repetition of key words or ideas also helps to supply smooth transition between sentences or paragraphs. It is especially helpful in a composition to tie the thesis topic to the major points of the essay and to tie the topic sentences of paragraphs to the major points of the paragraph.

Below is the introductory paragraph for a literary essay followed by the topic sentences of the first and second body paragraphs of the essay. Notice the repetition of the key words from the thesis to the topic sentence.

Imagine it: no MTV, no local movie theatre, no Saturday night dances, no football games, only work and *Bible* study. This is the bleak, routine life of a teenager in the Puritan Salem depicted in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. **Perhaps this repressive background is one reason why the teenager Mary Warren becomes defiant and disloyal when Salem's children are finally given a voice.**

Topic sentence from first body paragraph.

In the beginning, Mary Warren seems typical of all Puritan children, meek and respectful of her elders, until her role as a court official fills her with defiance.

Topic sentence from second body paragraph.

By the end of the play, not only has Mary Warren become defiant, but she also changes her loyalty.

TYPE THREE: TRANSITION WORDS

Certain words and phrases, often at the beginning of a sentence, suggest the relationship of the sentence to the preceding one. These words or phrases, called TRANSITION WORDS, may show that something is about to be added or compared or contrasted or that a different time or place occurs.

Transitions are very important words used to signal or indicate information within a composition. They are helpful because they help a reader understand when the writer moves from one point to another. You should use transitions in your writing when you start a new point.

A good writer will vary the specific transitions in a piece of writing. For example, if you use "first, second, and third" as your transitions, you might try substituting "next" for "second" and "lastly" for "third". Using a variety of transitions keeps the composition from sounding mechanical.

Listed below are some of the common transitions that you may use in your compositions. Keep this handout for future reference.

PURPOSE	TRANSITIONAL WORDS
1 To show contrast	but, however, on the other hand, nevertheless, and yet, despite this, etc.
2 To show cause and effect relationships	for this reason, therefore, as a result, consequently, so, etc.
3 To move from one point to another	first of all, second of all, third of all, etc., first, second, third, etc., firstly etc., one way, one point, one type, one reason, a second way, point, type, reason, etc., another reason, way, point, type, etc., next, also, in addition, finally, lastly
4 To continue within a point or add on	furthermore, moreover, in addition, likewise, similarly, also
5 To introduce an example or illustrate an idea	for example, for instance, an illustration of, to illustrate, this is clear when
6 To end or conclude	finally, in conclusion, to conclude, all in all, in short, in summary, to summarize, lastly

In the following paragraph, the **bold** words show how common transition words may be used in writing.

> In the essay as in business, trying to get started and getting off on the wrong foot account for most of our lost motion. **So** you will start by learning how to find a thesis that will, in a sense, virtually organize your essay for you. **Next** you will study the relatively simple principles behind the structure styling. **Then**, for exercise, you will experiment with various styles of sentences, playing with length and complexity. **And finally** you will get down to words themselves. **Here** is where writing tells, and **here**, as in ancient times, you will be in touch with the mystery. **But again**, there are things to do and things not to do, and these can be learned.