Editing, Part 3: Transitions (based on Clark 97)

Purpose: These activities are meant to guide you through the editing process of your paper draft. This should cover adding transitions, correctly using citations, and making best use of academic style.

Phrases: Transitions in academic writing come from key phrases and are associated with signposting and signal phrases. Some of these phrases include:

- Simple signposting: First this section will discuss…Next it will…Then it will…Finally it will…
- Demonstrating previous connections: In the previous section…As already discussed…As previously stated…
- Connecting causes and effects: Therefore….Consequently…Thus…As a result…
- Compare and contrast: Similarly…In the same way…On the other hand….However…

Signposting: Signposting and transitions can also be as complicated as a section or paragraph dedicated to the explanation of one idea and how it connects directly to the next or previous idea. See also the Roadmap in Graduate Writing Activity C.3- Drafting, The Literature Review.

Consider these fictional examples:

> *This section will examine the relationship between pedagogical practices in community college writing and the teaching of rhetoric at the graduate level.*

Weak: This statement is clunky. It addresses the main point and the organization of the manuscript, but in the time it takes to do so, it could have made an actual point about this relationship. However, it is worth noting that sometimes the clunky sentence is necessary for signposting or drafting.

> *In the following chapter, the relationship between pedagogical practices in community college writing and the teaching of rhetoric at the graduate level will be considered at every level.*

Better: This is technically better than the previous version because it makes some statement, but this new sentence is written in the passive voice and ultimately does not say as much about the relationship as it could.

> *As upcoming research and analysis will demonstrate, giving students the awareness to practice rhetorical strategies early at the community college level develops stronger rhetorical strategies at the graduate level*.

Best: This sentence makes a clear statement about the relationship being examined while not taking up space or wasting time signaling to the reader what could be said right away.

Questions: Transition with frontloading and backloading when appropriate

- Does one sentence lead naturally into another?
- Are the sentences too short? Can these sentences be combined?
- Is there a need for additional details?
- Are your sentences too long? Can these sentences be divided?

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Works Cited: Clark, Irene. *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Entering the Conversation.* Prentice Hall/Pearson Education, 2007.

- Have you checked for common mechanical errors such as subject-verb agreement, pronoun reference, and missing or extra commas?

Transition Sentences – Frontloading and Backloading

Frontloading—The act of "frontloading" is creating a transition sentence at the start of a new paragraph. This transition sentence should refer to items and ideas from the previous paragraph or section and their relationship to the upcoming paragraph or section.

> EX—{This is the end of a paragraph} If the seas continue to rise, experts say that populated areas closest to sea level may be evacuated or face complete destruction eventually.
>
> **Although seas are undoubtedly rising, they are not as immediate of a concern as smog population in dense urban areas, which have seen emission levels skyrocket in the twenty-first century**. {This is the start of a paragraph}

The bolded text represents the "frontloaded" transition sentence. It mirrors language between the previous paragraph ("rising sea level") while also acting as a topic sentence for the upcoming topics (answering *what*, *where*, and *when*). It is also ideal to move to a new paragraph here because this new paragraph both introduces a new topic and provides a contrast or counterpoint from the previous topic.

Backloading—The inverse of frontloading, "backloading" is the act of placing a transition sentence at the end of one paragraph before the beginning of the next.

> EX—{This is the end of a paragraph} If the seas continue to rise, experts say that populated areas closest to sea level may be evacuated or face complete destruction eventually. **Despite the attention that rising sea levels are gaining, scientists are concerned that they are not receiving attention quickly enough.**
>
> One concern that is receiving plenty of attention as of late is the environmental cost of deforestation. {This is the start of a paragraph}

The bolded text here represents the "backloaded" transition sentence. It follows many of the same moves as the frontloaded transition, but it is attached much more closely to the ideas of the previous sentence. The author has chosen not to mirror the language of the upcoming paragraph or introduce any of the answers for the upcoming topic sentence. Even so, it is clear that the author is beginning a transition, using words that denote contrast ("Despite") before moving to a new idea.

Which one is better? That depends on your level of comfort as a writer! Some writers prefer one move over the other, while other writers use some combinations, answering some of the topic questions in one transition before reasserting them in the next. For example:

> **Despite the attention that rising sea levels are gaining, scientists in places like China are concerned that the focus on sea diminishes scientific focus on land.**
>
> **While sea levels have risen in small increments over the last five years, smog levels in Beijing have risen nearly twice as fast in the same amount of time**.

Works Cited: Clark, Irene. *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Entering the Conversation.* Prentice Hall/Pearson Education, 2007.

Some authors might argue that this much transitional padding may become distracting. Always consider the needs of the audience and the readability of your work when creating transitions.

Works Cited: Clark, Irene. *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Entering the Conversation.* Prentice Hall/Pearson Education, 2007.