GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS
Using Transitional Expressions

Transitional expressions function to connect one idea to another between or within sentences and to alert readers to connections between paragraphs or blocks of the text. They are signals that help readers follow the direction of your thoughts as a writer. Transitional expressions include conjunctive adverbs used to join or to connect independent clauses such as however, hence, also, consequently, meanwhile, nevertheless, moreover, and furthermore as well as transitional phrases such as after all, even so, in addition, on the other hand, for example, as a result, and in conclusion.

When a transitional expression appears at the beginning of a sentence or within an independent clause, it is generally set off with commas.

**Meanwhile,** we had little choice but to wait for him to make his decision. (conjunctive adverb)

**As a result,** the department made the following recommendations. (transitional phrase)

Many of our competitors, **on the other hand,** are reluctant to bid for the project.

The first speaker, **for example,** was both professional and entertaining.

When a transitional expression links two independent clauses in a compound sentence, it is preceded by a semicolon and usually set off with commas.

The first speaker was both professional and entertaining; **nevertheless,** the full program was disappointing. (conjunctive adverb)

The annual report was critical of budgetary spending; **as a result,** the department made the following recommendations. (transitional phrase)

Depending on where you want to place the emphasis in communicating the direction of your thoughts, you have some flexibility as a writer in how to structure the sentences and in the placement of transitional expressions either before or within a particular clause.

It was a long and difficult journey; **however,** once we arrived, we were able to relax and to enjoy ourselves.

It was a long and difficult journey; once we arrived, **however,** we were able to relax and to enjoy ourselves.

It was a long and difficult journey. **However,** once we arrived, we were able to relax and to enjoy ourselves.
It was a long and difficult journey. Once we arrived, however, we were able to relax and to enjoy ourselves.

It is important not to confuse transitional expressions with coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, so, for, yet) when connecting two independent clauses into one sentence. Transitional expressions appear between independent clauses preceded by a semicolon and usually followed by a comma. Coordinating conjunctions are preceded by a comma when they link independent clause.

I wanted to attend the lecture. However, I had a previous commitment. (transitional expression)

I wanted to attend the lecture; however, I had a previous commitment. (transitional expression)

I wanted to attend the lecture, but I had a previous commitment. (coordinating conjunction)

**USING CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS**

Functioning as transitional expressions, conjunctive adverbs are used to connect independent clauses and indicate the relation between the clauses. Similar to transitional phrases, conjunctive adverbs can be used with a semicolon to join two independent clauses into one sentence or set off with commas to stand alone with an independent clause.

The flight was delayed for two hours; consequently, we missed our connecting flight.

The flight was delayed for two hours. Consequently, we missed our connecting flight.

We wanted to win first prize in the competition. Instead, we finished in second place.

We wanted to win first prize in the competition; instead, we finished in second place.

**Common Conjunctive Adverbs**

- accordingly
- also
- besides
- certainly
- consequently
- conversely
- finally
- furthermore
- hence
- however
- incidentally
- indeed
- instead
- likewise
- meanwhile
- moreover
- next
- nevertheless
- now
- otherwise
- similarly
- specifically
- still
- subsequently
- then
- therefore
- thus
USING TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

Transitional expressions can be categorized according to what they signify as illustrated below. Note that certain words or phrases appear in more than one category. As a writer, you can use transitional expressions:

• to show addition
  additionally  further  moreover
  also  furthermore  next
  and  in addition  second
  besides  in the same way  similarly
  first  likewise  too

• to show contrast
  although  however  on the contrary
  at any rate  in contrast  on the other hand
  but  in spite of that  otherwise
  even so  instead  still
  even though  nevertheless  yet

• to compare
  also  in the same manner  next
  by comparison  in the same way  similarly
  equally  likewise  too

• to give examples
  after all  indeed  in truth
  as an illustration  in fact  specifically
  for example  in other words  that is
  for instance  in particular  to illustrate

• to show relationships in space
  above  beside  next to
  adjacent to  beyond  on
  against  far off  over
  alongside  in front of  there
  around  inside  to the left/right
  below  near the end  up front
• to show relationships in time

afterward  meanwhile  subsequently
at last  next  then
before  now  third
earlier  often  until now
first  once  when
in the meantime  second  years ago
later on  simultaneously  yesterday

• to show logical sequence

first / firstly  finally  to illustrate
second / secondly  last / lastly  that is
third / thirdly  then  in conclusion
next  above all

• to express an opinion

actually  certainly  undoubtedly
apparently  of course  unfortunately

• to summarize or conclude

accordingly  for this reason  in summary
as a result  hence  therefore
as a consequence  in a word  thus
briefly  in brief  to conclude
consequently  in short  to summarize

TROUBLESPOTS

When using transitional expressions, keep in mind there are often subtle differences between conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases as illustrated by the above list. If you are unsure about the precise meaning of a particular word or phrase, it is best to consult your dictionary. Also, while transitional expressions are helpful in connecting your ideas, too many transitions can make writing seem overly formal or stilted. Certain transitions such as hence, moreover, thus, and subsequently may make your writing sound too formal or artificial, which can be distracting to a reader.