



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
also
and
besides
first

further
furthermore
in addition
in the same way
likewise

moreover
next
second
similarly
too

- **to show contrast**

although
at any rate
but
even so
even though

however
in contrast
in spite of that
instead
nevertheless

on the contrary
on the other hand
otherwise
still
yet

- **to compare**

also
by comparison
equally

in the same manner
in the same way
likewise

next
similarly
too

- **to give examples**

after all
as an illustration
for example
for instance

indeed
in fact
in other words
in particular

in truth
specifically
that is
to illustrate

- **to show relationships in space**

above
adjacent to
against
alongside
around
below

beside
beyond
far off
in front of
inside
near the end

next to
on
over
there
to the left/right
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.