

Transition Words and Phrases

It is essential to understand how **transition words**, as a part of speech, can be used to combine ideas in writing - and thus ensure that ideas within sentences and paragraphs are elegantly connected - for the benefit of the reader. This will help to improve your **writing** (e.g. essay, comment, summary (scientific) review, (research) paper, letter, abstract, report, thesis, etc.). It is also fundamental to be aware of the sometimes subtle **meaning** of transition words within the English language.

List of Transition Words

This structured list of commonly used English **connecting words** — approximately 200, can be considered as quasi complete. It can be used (by students and teachers alike) to find the right expression. English transition words are essential, since they not only connect ideas, but also can introduce a certain shift, contrast or opposition, emphasis or agreement, purpose, result or conclusion, etc. in the line of argument. The transition words and phrases have been assigned only once to somewhat artificial categories, although some words belong to more than one category.

There is some overlapping with preposition and postposition, but for the purpose of clarity and completeness of this concise guide, I did not differentiate.

Agreement / Addition / Similarity

The transition words like **also, in addition, and, likewise**, add information, reinforce ideas, and express agreement with preceding material.

in the first place	by the same token
not only ... but also	again
as a matter of fact	to
in like manner	and
in addition	also
coupled with	then
in the same fashion / way	equally
first, second, third	identically
in the light of	uniquely
not to mention	like
to say nothing of	as
equally important	too

moreover
as well as
together with
of course
likewise

comparatively
correspondingly
similarly
furthermore
additionally

Opposition / Limitation / Contradiction

Transition phrases like **but**, **rather** and **or**, express that there is evidence to the **contrary** or point out **alternatives**, and thus introduce a change the line of reasoning (**contrast**).

although this may be true

(and) **yet**

in contrast

while

different from

albeit

of course ..., but

besides

on the other hand

as much as

on the contrary

even though

at the same time

although

in spite of

instead

even so / though

whereas

be that as it may

despite

then again

conversely

above all

otherwise

in reality

however

after all

rather

but

nevertheless

(and) **still**

nonetheless

unlike

regardless

or

notwithstanding

Cause / Condition / Purpose

These transitional phrases present specific **conditions** or **intentions**.

in the event that	whenever
granted (that)	while
as / so long as	because of
on (the) condition (that)	as
for the purpose of	since
with this intention	while
with this in mind	lest
in the hope that	in case
to the end that	provided that
for fear that	given that
in order to	only / even if
seeing / being that	so that
in view of	so as to
If	owing to
... then	inasmuch as
unless	due to
when	

Examples / Support / Emphasis

These transitional devices (like **especially**) are used to introduce examples as **support**, to indicate **importance** or as an **illustration** so that an idea is cued to the reader.

in other words	important to realize
to put it differently	another key point
for one thing	first thing to remember
as an illustration	most compelling evidence
in this case	must be remembered
for this reason	point often overlooked
to put it another way	to point out
that is to say	on the positive / negative side
with attention to	with this in mind
by all means	notably

including	significantly
like	in fact
to be sure	in general
namely	in particular
chiefly	in detail
truly	for example
indeed	for instance
certainly	to demonstrate
surely	to emphasize
markedly	to repeat
especially	to clarify
specifically	to explain
expressively	to enumerate
surprisingly	such as
frequently	

Effect / Consequence / Result

Some of these transition words (*thus, then, accordingly, consequently, therefore, henceforth*) are time words that are used to show that *after* a particular time there was a **consequence** or an **effect**.

Note that *for* and *because* are placed before the cause/reason. The other devices are placed before the consequences or effects.

as a result	hence
under those circumstances	consequently
in that case	therefore
for this reason	thereupon
for	forthwith
thus	accordingly
because the	henceforth
then	

Conclusion / Summary / Restatement

These transition words and phrases **conclude, summarize** and / or **restate** ideas, or indicate a final **general statement**. Also some words (like *therefore*) from the **Effect / Consequence** category can be used to summarize.

as can be seen
generally speaking
in the final analysis
all things considered
as shown above
in the long run
given these points
as has been noted
in a word
for the most part
after all
in fact
in summary
in conclusion
in short
in brief

in essence
to summarize
on balance
altogether
overall
ordinarily
usually
by and large
to sum up
on the whole
in any event
in either case
all in all

Time / Chronology / Sequence

These transitional words (like *finally*) have the function of limiting, restricting, and defining **time**. They can be used either alone or as part of *adverbial expressions*.

at the present time
from time to time
sooner or later
at the same time
up to the present time
to begin with
in due time
until now
now that
as soon as
as long as
in the meantime
in a moment

without delay
in the first place
all of a sudden
at this instant

immediately
quickly
finally
after
later
last
until
till

since	henceforth
then	whenever
before	eventually
hence	meanwhile
since	further
when	during
once	first, second
about	in time
next	prior to
now	forthwith
formerly	straightaway
suddenly	by the time
shortly	whenever
instantly	
presently	
occasionally	

Many transition words in the time category (*consequently; first, second, third; further; hence; henceforth; since; then, when; and whenever*) have other uses.

Except for the numbers (*first, second, third*) and *further* they add a meaning of **time** in expressing conditions, qualifications, or reasons. The numbers are also used to **add information** or **list examples**. *Further* is also used to indicate added space as well as added time.

Space / Location / Place

These transition words are often used as part of **adverbial expressions** and have the function to restrict, limit or qualify **space**. Quite a few of these are also found in the **Time** category and can be used to describe spatial order or spatial reference.

in the middle	above
to the left/right	below
in front of	down
on this side	up
in the distance	under
here and there	further
in the foreground	beyond
in the background	nearby
in the center of	wherever
	around
adjacent to	between
opposite to	before
here	alongside
there	amid
next	among
where	beneath
from	beside
over	behind
near	across

Connecting Words

Transition Words and Phrases			
Agreement / Addition / Similarity	in the first place	again	moreover
	not only ... but also	to	as well as
	as a matter of fact	and	together with
	in like manner	also	of course
	in addition	then	likewise
	coupled with	equally	comparatively
	in the same fashion / way	identically	correspondingly
	first, second, third	uniquely	similarly
	in the light of	like	furthermore
	not to mention	as	additionally
	to say nothing of	too	
	equally important		
	by the same token		

Excerpt from the PDF - showing the categories Agreement / Addition / Similarity

Transition Words are also sometimes called (or put in the category of) Connecting Words. Please feel free to download the corresponding and comprehensive 2 page cheat sheet » [Linking Words & Connecting Words](#) (Conjunctions & Transitional Devices) as a PDF (approx. 30 KB). It contains all the **transition words** listed on this site. The image to the left gives you an impression how it looks like.

Usage of Transition Words in Essays

Transition words and phrases are vital devices for **essays**, papers or other literary compositions. They improve the connections and transitions between sentences and paragraphs. They thus give the text a logical organization and structure (see also: a [List of Synonyms](#)).

All English **transition words** and **phrases** (sometimes also called 'conjunctive adverbs') do the same work as **coordinating conjunctions**: they connect two words, phrases or clauses together and thus the text is easier to read and the coherence is improved.

Usage: transition words are used with a special rule for **punctuation**: a semicolon or a period is used after the first 'sentence', and a comma is almost always used to set off the transition word from the second 'sentence'.

Example 1:

People use 43 muscles when they frown; however, they use only 28 muscles when they smile.

Example 2:

However, transition words can also be placed at the beginning of a new paragraph or sentence - not only to indicate a step forward in the reasoning, but also to relate the new material to the preceding thoughts.

Use a semicolon to connect sentences, only if the group of words on either side of the semicolon is a complete sentence each (both must have a subject and a verb, and could thus stand alone as a complete thought).

Reference:

Smart Words - A handpicked Collection of Gems of the English Language. (n.d.). *Smart Words - A handpicked Collection of Gems of the English Language*. Retrieved July 20, 2013, from <http://www.smart-words.org/>