

Transition Words and Phrases

Writers use transition words and phrases to improve coherence and guide readers. Readers use transition words and phrases to determine how the writer has organized the material and to improve their comprehension. There are a number of categories of transition words:

Signal Words are used to indicate that the information is especially important:

this, that, these, those, one

-est forms of adjectives (safest, greatest, highest)

main	and	finally	above all
especially	indeed	vital	primary
key	major	despite	just as
principal	central	chief	significant
moreover	still	of course	even though
distinctive	naturally	at any rate	

should be (remembered, noted, observed)

not only . . . but also

most (important, noteworthy, obvious)

Illustration Words indicate to the reader that examples or illustrations will follow to clarify, define, explain, or develop an idea or a generalization:

that is (to say)	such as	specifically	for instance	as
to illustrate	for example	as when	the following	

Order of Sequence Words indicate that the arrangement of events, reasons, issues, etc. is according to their order of importance (**emphatic order**) or the order in which they happened (**chronological order**):

first	second	key	after	vital indeed
especially	before	despite	until	meanwhile
and	finally	there	here	next
presently	from... to	whenever	when	subsequently
ultimately	most important	then		

Addition Words indicate that the writer's idea will continue in the same direction with more points or details added:

in addition	also	next (reason, quality, example, event)
moreover	another	other (reason, qualities)
furthermore	again	

Comparison Words signal similarity:

similarly	likewise	both	just as . . . so
comparatively	alike	same	also
each can be compared			

Contrast Words signal the opposite view or change the direction of a previously stated idea. They may signal that the writer may slightly alter or modify an earlier statement:

however	still	even though	instead
despite	although	though	conversely
more than	less than	on the other hand	yet
one . . . the other	but	different from	each
some . . . others	while	neither . . . nor	either . . . or
then . . . now	in contrast	nevertheless	whereas

-er (forms of adjectives) than (higher than, safer than, greater than)

Cause/Effect Words signal a reason and result relationship:

because	then	since	until
when	whenever	thus	after
as a result	consequently	therefore	hence
from . . . to	if . . . then		

Summary Words signal the conclusion of a topic. Sometimes they indicate the most important point within a paragraph or at the end of a longer discussion:

finally	in brief	last	last of all again
therefore	to repeat	hence	above all
to summarize	to sum up	most important	in conclusion
to conclude	ultimately	to reiterate	