

NAME: _____

TRANSITIONS ARE LIKE

Waiters



OBJECTIVE:

I can write transitional words, phrases, and sentences to show how ideas are connected.

A good waiter turns an average meal into a fantastic experience. He magically fills your glass before you have to ask. Your plates are smoothly removed from the table, just in time for new food to appear. He answers your questions, times everything perfectly, and controls your emotional satisfaction. When a great waiter or waitress is helping you, the meal flows efficiently, and everyone is happier.

Transitions are like those waiters. When you put a transition in the right spot at the right time, your essay's content makes more sense, increasing your chances that your reader will not only understand, but agree with you. Transitions are not just words to add randomly - they improve the clarity of the content.

————— *But what are they, exactly? There are three kinds of transitions:* —————

- Words: Single words like "therefore", "moreover", and "finally"?
- Phrases: Two or more words, like "in fact", "in addition", and "as a result".
- Sentences: Entire sentences, located at the ends of paragraphs, that use keywords to connect a previous paragraph with the next one.

CHECK OUT THESE EXAMPLES: HOW ARE TRANSITIONS "HELPING" THE ESSAY?

(You're looking at two body paragraphs taken from an argumentative essay about school uniforms. The topic sentences are bolded to help you find the main idea of each paragraph.)

The first reason why school uniforms are valuable is because they limit distractions among students. When some students wear popular, expensive brand logos on their shoes, jeans, or shirts, it can make poorer students feel jealous, or just weaken their self-esteem when they feel left out; furthermore, low self-esteem is correlated with lower grades in school, making this distraction unacceptable. In addition, students who wear tight, low-cut, or too-short clothing distract students of both genders when they should all be focusing on more important things. Finally, some types of clothes can actually be symbols for gangs or cliques, which can make others feel left out or possibly unsafe. Requiring students to wear school uniforms reduces the risk that students will feel insecure or in danger. The equality and focused environment brought by uniforms is so important that they outweigh the negatives, such as limited personal expression.

Some students and parents feel that uniforms restrict a student's ability to express themselves. It is true that a uniform restricts the colors, types of clothing, brands, and materials that a student can wear. However, clothing is just one way that students can express themselves, and as a result it is completely untrue to argue that a student cannot show individuality or personality with a uniform. Many other qualities, such as speech, behavior, personality, and other choices can reveal who you are in a more meaningful way than outward appearance. Also, uniforms do allow students some freedom with hair, nails, makeup, jewelry, and other accessories, which gives students control of their image. Finally, it is important to remember that all dress codes restrict clothing in some way, and uniforms only do this to a larger extent. In conclusion, a uniform may limit a student's options, but those limits have more positives than negatives.

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RECIPE FOR A GOOD TRANSITIONAL SENTENCE:

1. It uses keywords (or synonyms) from EACH paragraph. This helps make the connection easy to notice.
2. It is located at the end of a paragraph. Some writers bend this rule; others expect this location!
3. It accurately focuses on the main ideas of each paragraph. Don't use keywords from random details – stick to what is most important about each paragraph's content.
4. It shows contrast, continuation, or emphasis. When you clarify how the two paragraphs are connected, it makes the order of paragraphs seem less random.

Take a moment to reread the transitional sentence on the previous page. Does it meet these criteria?

Words of caution

- Don't feel obligated to use them **TOO** often. When waiters stop by the table a lot, it can actually be annoying.
- Make sure the transition is appropriate for that spot. If two sentences agree with each other, it would be a bad idea to put the word "However" between them!

Your turn! Copy two paragraphs from your essay in the space below and...

1. Use a caret (the editing symbol ^) to insert transitional phrases where you can
2. Write one transitional sentence BETWEEN your paragraphs

Does my paragraph...

- Flow smoothly into the next one?
- Use at least 2-3 transitional words or phrases to show contrast, continuation, or emphasis?

EXIT TICKET:

Summarize what you learned about transitional words and sentences. What is most important to remember?