

Transitions

Information and Examples

- Good transitions can connect paragraphs and turn disconnected writing into a unified whole.
- Instead of treating paragraphs as separate ideas, transitions can help readers understand how paragraphs work together, reference one another, and build to a larger point.

- The key to producing good transitions is **highlighting connections** between corresponding paragraphs.
- By referencing in one paragraph the relevant material from previous ones, writers can develop important points for their readers.

- It is a good idea to continue one paragraph where another leaves off (instances where this is especially challenging may suggest that the paragraphs don't belong together at all.)
- Picking up **key phrases** from the previous paragraph and **highlighting** them in the next can create an obvious progression for readers. Many times, it only takes a few words to draw these connections.

- Instead of writing transitions that could connect any paragraph to any other paragraph, write a transition that could only connect one specific paragraph to another specific paragraph.

Example:

- **End of 1st paragraph** - Overall, Management Systems International has logged increased sales in every sector, leading to a significant rise in third-quarter profits.
- **Start of 2nd paragraph** - Another important thing to note is that the corporation had expanded its international influence.
- How can we create a stronger connection between these paragraphs?

Revision:

- **End of 1st paragraph** - Overall, Management Systems International has logged increased sales in every sector, leading to a significant rise in third-quarter profits.
- **Start of 2nd paragraph** - **These impressive profits** are largely due to the corporation's expanded international influence.

Example:

- **End of 1st paragraph** - Fearing for the loss of Danish lands, Christian IV signed the Treaty of Lubeck, effectively ending the Danish phase of the 30 Years War.
- **Start of 2nd paragraph** - But then something else significant happened. The Swedish intervention began.
- How can we create a stronger connection between these paragraphs?

Revision:

- **End of 1st paragraph** - Fearing for the loss of more Danish lands, Christian IV signed the Treaty of Lubeck, effectively ending the Danish phase of the 30 Years War.
- **Start of 2nd paragraph** - Shortly after Danish forces withdrew, the Swedish intervention began.

Example:

- **End of 1st paragraph** - Amy Tan became a famous author after her novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, skyrocketed up the bestseller list.
- **Start of 2nd paragraph** - There are other things to note about Tan as well. Amy Tan also participates in the satirical garage band the Rock Bottom Remainders with Stephen King and Dave Barry.
- How can we create a stronger connection between these paragraphs?

Revision:

- **End of 1st paragraph** - Amy Tan became a famous author after her novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, skyrocketed up the bestseller list.
- **Start of 2nd paragraph** - **Though her fiction is well known**, her work with the satirical garage band the Rock Bottom Remainers receives far less publicity.

- Read the following paragraph.
- Note how disconnected the ideas are from each other.

- The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. Mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. The skin, hair, teeth, fingernails and toenails, and facial features of the mummies were evident. It is possible to diagnose the disease they suffered in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies. The process was remarkably effective. Sometimes apparent were the fatal afflictions of the dead people: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head, and polio killed a child king. Mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages.

- Now read the same paragraph revised for coherence.
- Note the transitional words and phrases.
- *Italics* indicates pronouns and repeated/restated key words; **bold** indicates transitional tag-words; and underlining indicates parallel structures.
- All of these techniques help connect ideas within a paragraph.

- The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by *making mummies* of them. **In short**, *mummification* consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages; **and the process** was remarkably effective. **Indeed**, *mummies* several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. *Their* skin, hair, teeth, fingernails and toenails, and facial features are **still** evident. *Their* diseases in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies, are **still** diagnosable. **Even their** fatal afflictions are **still** apparent: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head; a child king died from polio.

- The paragraph is now much more coherent. The organization of the information and the links between sentences help readers move easily from one sentence to the next. Notice how this writer uses a variety of coherence devices, sometimes in combination, to achieve overall paragraph coherence.

Reference information from the
following:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/01/>.

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/transitions.htm>.