

# THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

at **Sam Houston**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

## Transitions

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Transitions can help your reader understand how your ideas fit together. Rather than jump from one thought to the next, you can use transitions to ease the reader along.

### Examples

Addition: and, also, in addition to, further, furthermore, similarly, not only/but also, both/and, moreover, either/or, another, like

Contrast: but, contrary to, yet, still, in opposition to, however, notwithstanding, although, whereas, while neither/nor, on the other hand

Example: for example, that is

Time: when, as, already, then, after, afterwards

Sequence: next, then, soon, after, afterwards, following, since, first, second (etc.), finally

Result: thus, therefore, since, so, because, for

### Within a Sentence

We often see transitional words used within sentences to link clauses.

Example (within a discussion of foods parents may serve their children): *“One available option is peanut butter, a food that is relatively simple to serve **and** traditionally enjoyed by children.”*

The transitional word “and” (a conjunction) moves the reader from one attribute of peanut butter to another.

### Connecting Sentences

We also see transitional words or phrases used to link a sentence to the previous sentence.

Example (Following the above example sentence): *“**However**, two varieties of peanut butter are available, so parents who decide to offer their children peanut butter must further choose between creamy and crunchy options.”*

The transitional word “however” marks a contrast between the previous idea and the new one. In this case, the first sentence identifies peanut butter as a food option and the second sentence begins by indicating that even within that option, there are options. In other words, one idea is that peanut butter *is* an option, the next idea is that peanut butter itself *presents* two options.

## Connecting Paragraphs

Example (Following a paragraph about how much more difficult crunchy peanut butter can be to spread): *“Creamy peanut butter is **also** superior to crunchy peanut butter in the area of spreadability.”*

The transitional word “also” connects this paragraph to the previous one. Both paragraphs are designed to argue in favor of creamy peanut butter. The first paragraph presents one supporting point, spreadability, and the next one begins with an “addition” transition that indicates that this paragraph, like the one before it, will present a point that supports the thesis.

An ideal way to structure a transition between paragraphs is to begin by referring to the material from the previous paragraph and then to identify the new material for the coming paragraph.

Example: *“Not only is crunchy peanut butter more difficult to spread than creamy peanut butter, but it is also more likely to be rejected by a person who prefers creamy.”*

Notice that the first half of this sentence summarizes the previous paragraph. The second half of the sentence moves on to the topic of this paragraph while establishing how it is related to the one before it. The “not only...but” construction is a way to indicate that the new material is being added on to the previous material.

## Tips

Avoid repetition. Reading the same transitional words and phrases is unpleasant.

Nobody wants to read: “The first thing... The second thing... The third thing...”

Do not obsess. Some students have had instructors critique the “flow” of essays, and believe that transitions alone will fix the problem. They can help, but be sure to consider sentence variety, grammaticality, and organization along with transitions.

Do not go overboard. Not every sentence needs to begin with a transition.

Be careful. Make sure you are using an appropriate word or phrase given the relationship between the two “things” you’re connecting. Some words/phrases establish an oppositional relationship (however, even though, etc.), others establish complimentary relationships (also, therefore, etc.), and others establish alternate relationships. Choose wisely.