Using Transitions

There are several ways to use transitional words and phrases between sentences, paragraphs and ideas to make the structure of your essay apparent to your reader at the paragraph and sentence level.

† VERBAL BRIDGES: REPEAT KEY WORDS OR PHRASES.

Repeating key words, and synonyms of these words, from your thesis and topic sentences throughout your paper reminds the reader of main ideas and themes.

Thesis:
- Herbs are both beautiful and flavorful, which makes them versatile plants that both gardeners and chefs can enjoy.

Topic sentences:
- In fact, these versatile plants are as easy to cook with as herbs are to grow.
- In addition, those who neither cook nor garden can enjoy these versatile plants.

Concluding sentence:
- From stems in a few pots on a small patio or window sill, to ground cover for a larger yard, these versatile plants can be used and enjoyed by many.

(† You can build “logical bridges” between paragraphs as well, by reintroducing and then expanding on the same idea in more than one paragraph.)

† USE PARALLEL STRUCTURE WITHIN SENTENCES.

Parallel structure within sentences can emphasize and connect ideas, and prevent confusion.

Read the following examples and see how parallel structure makes the ideas clearer and the sentences easier to read.

Not in parallel structure:     In parallel structure:

Bring a friend from out of town or who is free.  Bring a friend who is from out of town or who is free.

The students completed the reading, met for discussion and finish their written assignment.  The students completed the reading, met for discussion and finished their written assignments.

The city council was open to development, so they opened the nature preserve to developers.  The city council was open to development, so the nature preserve was opened to developers.

Children have a lot of energy and often enjoy running, biking, and to swim.  Children have a lot of energy and often enjoy running, biking, and swimming.

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## Verbal Cues: Transition Words and Phrases

Insert words where you need transitions in your own writing, from the appropriate word banks below.

### Cues that Lead the Reader Forward:
*If you want to...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>...signal a sequence, use:</th>
<th>again, also, and, then, and then, besides, finally, first, second, third, furthermore, last, moreover, next, still, too, in addition, as well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...situate in time, use:</td>
<td>after a [time period], after a while, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at that time, when, before, earlier, while, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, soon, meanwhile, now, presently, since, so far, simultaneously, then, thereafter, until, at the moment, followed by, preceded by, subsequently, suddenly, today, currently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...to repeat or add, use:</td>
<td>again, and, as important as, besides, first, second, following, furthermore, least/most of all, neither, nor, not only ... but, primarily, secondarily, repeatedly, still, too</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cues that Make the Reader See Relationships:
*If you want to...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>...make a comparison, use:</th>
<th>again, also, in the same way, likewise, similarly, once more</th>
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<tr>
<td>...contrast, use:</td>
<td>although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the one hand, on the other hand, regardless, still, though, yet, conversely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...indicate cause and effect, use:</td>
<td>as a result, because, consequently, for this reason, hence, if, so, then, therefore, thus, accordingly, for this purpose, thereupon, to this end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cues that Develop and Summarize:
*If you want to...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>...introduce an example or evidence, use:</th>
<th>for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, of course, specifically, such as, the following example, after all, to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...generalize, use:</td>
<td>commonly, generally, in general, for the most part, on the whole, usually, typically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...concede a point, use:</td>
<td>certainly, even though, granted, in fairness, in truth, naturally, of course, to be fair, while it’s true, although it is true that, I admit that, it may appear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...summarize or conclude, use:</td>
<td>again, as have I said, as we have seen, as mentioned earlier, in conclusion*, in other words, in short, in sum*, therefore, thus, as a result, as has been noted, on the whole, to summarize*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*note that using these phrases makes explicit that you are concluding, but is not always viewed as sophisticated or subtle in college-level writing; use sparingly.
Practice with Transitions

1. Identify the transitions used in the following sample sentences from a research essay.

   Nutritionists, medical doctors and the USDA each propose many recommendations for a healthier lifestyle. **Specifically,** a balanced diet and regular exercise are two habits that experts recommend people develop (Smith 201).

   The food pyramid developed by the USDA advises that the average adult diet consist **primarily** of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, then **dairy,** and **last** of meat, fat and sugar.

   In the **past** fats and meats have been considered more important to incorporate, but in **recent decades** much research has been done and **now** a very different diet is suggested (Chen 47).

   On the **whole,** variety in one’s diet is recommended.

   In the **same way,** diversity in one’s exercise routine is beneficial.

   **However,** consistency in healthy eating and exercising is most important.

   As a **result** of consistently healthy lifestyle, people found that they felt better and were able to enjoy life more.

   **Of course,** many people find maintaining a healthy lifestyle difficult, but fully understanding the benefits can help to motivate people to change their habits to healthy ones.

   **Thus,** education about healthy eating and activity is key to encouraging people to incorporate these habits into their daily routine.

2. Transitions are also important in creative fiction and non-fiction. Note the transition words in the following excerpt and identify what types of transitions are used in the story:

   It was a **cold day in March** when I found out. I had **just ridden home** from an **early morning** shift at the local music store where I had worked for several years. I prided myself on helping to establish its reputation for carrying a large selection of both mainstream and underground albums. **As I tossed my bike bag by the front door, I glanced at the answering machine.** The message light was blinking rapidly, even ominously it seemed, and it was with some trepidation that I pressed the button to listen to my messages. I heard:

   “Hey Jen, just checking in to see how you are, I heard the news…” It was my friend Jill. **What news,** I thought nervously. **Next** message:

   “Hey baby girl, its Pop. Just wanted to check in. Give me a call.” Apparently my dad had not heard “the news” either. **Last** message; it was my boss:

   “Jen, I didn’t get a chance to catch you at work today, but I have some bad news. You know that business has not been good lately, and, well, I had to make a decision… I’m going to have to close the store… I know this must be killing you …Please call me back…” I didn’t notice that I had been holding my breath until the quick burst escaped my lungs.

   a. **What function do the phrases** “cold day in March” and “just ridden home” and “early morning” **serve?**

   b. **“As I tossed my bike bag by the front door, I glanced at the answering machine.” This sentence is in** ________________ structure.

   c. The words “Next” and “Last” as Jen listens to each message signal what?
Working With Your Draft

3. What is the purpose of this paper? Are you arguing a point? Are you comparing or contrasting? Are you describing a person, activity or event?
   - **Identify** the type of essay you are writing and **write** your thesis or main idea in the box below:

What point are you making in this body paragraph? Are you making connections? Are you leading the reader toward an idea or point? Are you adding or repeating information?
   - **Write** the main idea of your paragraph in the box below. This is your topic sentence. **Choose** an appropriate transition word from the word banks above to use in your topic sentence.

   - **Write** topic sentences and **choose** transition words for your body paragraphs that need transitions between ideas, paragraphs, and sentences:

What is your concluding idea? Are you summarizing previous points? What new information are you providing the reader?
   - **Write** your concluding idea in the box below and **choose** appropriate transition words that summarize, repeat, conclude or generalize.