



Transitions Within and Between Sentences

Sentence-level “transitional elements” are words or short phrases that relate two or more **clauses** (a word group with a subject and a verb) within or between sentences. The most common transitional elements are called *coordinating conjunctions*, *subordinating conjunctions*, *conjunctive adverbs*, and *transitional phrases*. Although transitional elements are not always necessary at the beginnings or in the middles of sentences, it is important to use them to show the relationships between ideas and prevent choppy, disconnected writing.

Coordinating Conjunctions

There are seven coordinating conjunctions, commonly referred to using the acronym FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. Coordinating conjunctions connect clauses *equally*. When you use a coordinating conjunction, one clause’s meaning does not depend on the other; instead, both clauses are independent but joined inside a sentence.

She loves to eat cherry pie, but she is a messy eater.

In this example, we learn two facts about the person: she loves to eat cherry pie and she is a messy eater. The coordinating conjunction *but* shows the contrasting relationship between the two facts. However, if the clauses switch places, neither the meaning nor the relationship changes:

She is a messy eater, but she loves to eat cherry pie.

Punctuating Coordinating Conjunctions

- When a coordinating conjunction connects independent clauses, place a comma **before** the conjunction.

I love to eat cherry pie, but I am a messy eater.

- When a coordinating conjunction connects just two things or actions, do not use a comma.

I went to the bakery and bought a cherry pie.

Subordinating Conjunctions (Subordinators)

Subordinators show an *unequal* relationship between two clauses in a sentence. Subordinators make one clause's meaning *depend on* another's, so clauses that begin with a subordinator always require another clause that does not begin with a subordinator.

I went to the bakery because I wanted a cherry pie.

Because I went to the bakery, I wanted cherry pie.

In both of the examples above, the clause that begins with “because” depends on the other statement in the sentence. Though unlike coordinating conjunctions, when the subordinator changes places in the sentence, the entire meaning changes. The first sentence shows that the cause “I wanted cherry pie” led to the effect “I went to the bakery.” The second sentence says that the cause “I went to the bakery” led to the effect “I wanted cherry pie.” See the Appendix for common subordinators and the types of connections they show.

Punctuating Subordinating Conjunctions

- If the subordinator is between the two clauses, do not use a comma.

I went to the bakery because I wanted a cherry pie.

- If the subordinator comes at the start of a sentence, place a comma after the *first clause*, NEVER right after the subordinator.

Although I got to the bakery early, they were sold out of pies.

Conjunctive Adverbs and Transitional Phrases

Conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases *show the relationship* between two sentences or between two independent clauses joined by a semicolon. Strong punctuation always separates clauses related by a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase.

I got to the bakery early. Unfortunately, they were out of pies.

In the example above, “unfortunately” shows a contrasting relationship between the two sentences. “Unfortunately” is followed by a comma because it is the introductory element of the second sentence. Here, the two sentences do not join; instead, “unfortunately” simply helps the reader relate one sentence's idea to another. One could also use a semicolon and join the clauses instead. See the Appendix for common conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases and the types of relationships they show.

Punctuating Transitional Expressions

- When a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase joins two clauses, use a semicolon or period between the two clauses and a comma after the transitional expression.

She wanted cherry pie. However, the bakery was sold out.

She wanted cherry pie; on the other hand, I wanted a cookie.

- When a transitional expression is in the middle of a clause, put a comma before and after the transitional expression.

She wanted cherry pie; I, on the other hand, wanted a cookie.

Appendix

The following list shows subordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, and transitional phrases that indicate certain types of relationships.

Subordinators

To compare: as, as if, as though, just as, so . . . as

To contrast: although, despite, even though, than, though

To indicate place: where, wherever

To indicate time: as, as long as, as soon as, after, before, now that, once, since

To show cause or effect: as, because, as long as, inasmuch as, since, until, when, whenever, while

To indicate chronology or order: after, as, before, once, since, until, when, whence, while

To show logic: because, if, since

To concede: although, even though, if, though, whereas, while

To show conditions: as long as, if, in case, inasmuch as, provided that, unless

To show purpose: in order that, lest, so that, that

Conjunctive Adverbs / Transitional Phrases

To add or show sequence: again; also; besides; equally important; finally; first, second . . .; further; furthermore; in addition; in the first place; last; moreover; next; still; then; too

To compare: also, similarly, likewise, in the same way

To contrast: but at the same time, even so, for all that, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the other hand, regardless, still

To provide examples or intensify: after all, an illustration of, another/one example is, even, for example, for instance, in fact, in particular, indeed, it is true, of course, specifically, that is, to illustrate, truly

To show conditions: on the condition that

To indicate place: above, adjacent to, atop, below, beyond, close, elsewhere, farther/farther on, here, in, near, nearby, north, south, east, west, on, on the other side, opposite, over, there, to the left/right

To indicate time: after a while, afterward, at last, at length, at that time, before, earlier, formerly, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, once, presently, shortly, simultaneously, so far, soon, subsequently, then, thereafter

To show cause or effect: accordingly, as a result, consequently, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end, with this object

To give additional information or support: additionally, again, also, equally important, furthermore, in addition to, in the first place, incidentally, moreover, more so, next, otherwise, too

To indicate chronology or order: afterward; at last; during; earlier; finally; first, second . . .; formerly; immediately; in the meantime; later; meanwhile; never; next; now; once; shortly; subsequently; then; thereafter

To show logic: also, as a result, because of, consequently, for this reason, hence, however, otherwise, then, therefore, thus

To repeat, summarize, or conclude: all in all, altogether, as has been said, finally, in brief, in closing, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in short, in simpler terms, in summary, on the whole, that is, then, therefore, to close, to put it differently, to sum up, to summarize