



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Writing Effective Sentences and Paragraphs

* Transitions are words and phrases that help bring coherence to a paragraph by signaling relationships between and among sentences.

* Transitions help ideas flow from sentence to sentence.

* The lack of transitions will result in an abrupt, choppy rhythm that lurches from one idea to the next.

* You can link a sentence together by using conjunctions and other transitional expressions according to the relationship they establish.

* You must choose transitions that fit your meaning and not expect a transition to provide meaning.

Now, look at how we can put the above statements about transitions into a paragraph:

Transitions are words and phrases that help bring coherence to a paragraph by signaling relationships between and among sentences. *In other words*, transitions help ideas flow from sentence to sentence. *Therefore*, the lack of transitions will result in an abrupt, choppy rhythm that lurches from one idea to the next. *However*, you can link a sentence together by using conjunctions and other transitional expressions according to the relationship they establish; *but*, you must choose transitions that fit your meaning and not expect a transition to provide meaning.

* Notice the transitions which have been italicized in the paragraph above. As you can see, transition words help you build your sentences together to make a point in a logical fashion. Also, transitions help a reader understand the connections between each point in each sentence.

Many teachers, having introduced vocabulary words at the beginning of a new unit or chapter, ask their students to use these words in original sentences. To prepare these students for the writing sections of the CAPT and to increase students' ability to write fluent and effective sentences, it would provide good practice if all students wrote sentences or pairs of sentences that conform to certain established patterns. Each week, you might require a student to work on one or two types of sentences.

Notice the following examples of sentence structures and transitions that connect ideas and promote clarity of expression.

Although—used to show contrast or difference

- Follow this model: **Although** [first sentence], [second sentence that contrasts with—is different from—the first sentence].
- Although Juan is rather terse in his writing, Juanita rambles on for pages and pages.

However—used to show contrast of difference

- Follow this model: [first sentence]; **however**, [second sentence].
- Marcie is very loquacious; however, her brother Saul rarely speaks at all.

Moreover—used to show an additional support or evidence

- Follow this model: [first sentence]; moreover, [second sentence].
- Alayah demonstrates a positive attitude in her word processing class; **moreover**, she maintains the highest attitude in the class.

Consequently—used to show a cause / effect relationship

- Follow this model: [first sentence giving the cause of something]; consequently, [second sentence showing the result or what happened].
- Ricky was exhausted from his long, arduous practice with the wrestling team; **consequently**, he fell asleep as soon as he got home and did not complete his essay for his American history class.

Ask your students to use these sentence patterns—along with the highlighted transition words—in their daily writing. Create a poster that reminds students of these forms, or make a handout that students can keep in their notebooks. Require your students to use these patterns on a regular basis. Doing this across the spectrum of classes will ensure that our students internalize the concept of joining ideas in effective ways.