

Transitions and Organizational Patterns

Part 1

Writers don't let their thoughts wander aimlessly. They think logically. They organize details in patterns. In the written language these patterns help you follow ideas more easily and, therefore, improve your understanding of the text. Authors use transition words and phrases to create patterns within their writing. The following are common patterns of organization and transitions used in writing.

Time Order/Process Pattern Ideas or events are presented in the order they occur. Sequences are told through dates, times, or numbers. Processes are explained through steps or stages.

Time Order/Process Transition Words: first, second, later, next, as soon as, after, then, finally, meanwhile, last, during, when, by the time, over time, until, step, stage, method, procedure, how to

Example: *When* Althea *first* began to drink, she just did not realize the risks she faced. *Over time*, her drinking slowly but surely took total control of her life.

The transition words *when*, *first*, and *over time* indicate a sequence in Althea's life.

Listing Pattern Items are named or listed as the details, and the order of the details is not important.

Listing Transition Words: first, second, third, another, also, too, finally, several, numerals (1,2,3), letters (a,b,c)

Example: *One* way to overcome boredom is by turning on the television. *Another* way is to read a good book.

The author is presenting a list of two ways to overcome boredom. The transition words *one* and *another* indicate the two ways.

Addition Pattern This pattern is actually a form of listing. Changing the order of the details does not change their meaning. Transitions of addition indicate that the writer is using a second idea along with the first one. The writer presents an idea and then adds other ideas to deepen or clarify the first idea.

Addition Transition Words: furthermore, additionally, also, besides, further, in addition, moreover, again, and, final, first of all, first, second, third, next, last of all

Example: Weightlifting builds *and* tones muscles; it *also* builds bone density.

The author first tells that weightlifting does two things: builds *and* tones. (Note – the order could be changed to tones *and* builds) Then the author wants to give additional information. The transition word *also* indicates another benefit of weightlifting.

Definition Pattern A definition is given to explain a new, difficult, or special term. Examples are provided to clarify the definition.

Definition Transition Words: consists of, is a term that, involves, is called, is characterized by, that is, occurs when, exists when, are those that, entails, means, for example, such as

Example: Repression is the mind's power to block fearful thoughts, impulses, and memories. *For example*, a person may repress or forget painful childhood memories.

In the first sentence, the definition of repression is given. The second sentence provides an example of repression to help you better understand the meaning. (Note the transition *for example*.)

Generalization and Example In this pattern the author gives a general statement or idea that is supported by one or more examples. In this pattern look for a topic sentence that is supported by one or more examples. The generalization statement is not always the first sentence.

Generalization/Example Transition Words: for example, to illustrate, such as, for instance, including, typically, an illustration

Example: Food labels provide important information. *For example*, the label on Rich Harvest Sweet Dark Whole Grain bread states that one slice has 120 calories.

The first sentence is a generalization about food labels. The transition *for example* gives a specific example that supports the general statement.

Classification Pattern Ideas are sorted into smaller groups and then the traits of each group are described. Because the groups are listed, transitions of addition are used in this thought pattern along with transitions that indicate groups.

Classification Transition Words: type, group, varieties, kinds, divisions

Example: Internet users have *two types* of access choices for surfing the Web. The *first type* of access to the Internet is the old-fashioned phone line. The *second type* of access is high-speed broadband through the TV cable or high-speed DSL through fiber optic phone lines.

The author is telling about two types of Internet access. Each type is identified by the transition words *first type* and *second type*.

Comparison-and-Contrast Pattern This organizational pattern emphasizes the similarities or differences between two or more items. In comparison, writers show the way two or more ideas are the same; in contrast, writers show the way two or more ideas are different. The focus can be on just similarities or just differences or a combination of both.

Comparison Transition Words: likewise, in comparison, to compare, resembles, is similar, in the same way, as well as, like, correspondingly, just as

Example: There are *similar* safety features on all the cars in the showroom.

The transition word *similar* indicates that all of the cars have the same safety features, so which ever car the buyer chooses should not be lacking in safety features.

Contrast Transition Words: in contrast, on the contrary, although, even though, similarly, however, on the other hand, as opposed to, whereas, instead, in spite of, different, differs from

Example: Mike studied and made a passing grade. Joe, *however*, didn't study and failed.

The transition word *however* shows the contrast between the two students; one passed, and one failed.

Combination Example: Mary, *like* her sister, has brown hair. *However*, the two *differ* when it comes to eye color.

The transition word *like* shows how Mary and her sister are the same; they both have brown hair. The transition words *however* and *differ* indicate that the sisters do not have the same color eyes.

Spatial (or Space) Order Pattern This pattern describes physical location or position in space.

Spatial Order Transition Words: above, below, besides, between, next to, in front of, behind, inside, outside, opposite, within, nearby, over, under

Example: Drivers should sit 10 to 12 inches from the steering wheel to allow the air bag to inflate *toward* the chest and *away* from the face and neck.

The transition words *toward* and *away* give a clear image of how the driver should be seated.

Cause and Effect Pattern This pattern describes or discusses an event or action that is caused by another event or action.

Cause-Effect Transition Words: therefore, hence, for this reason, since, leads to, creates, yields, stems from, produces, for, because, as a result, due to, thus, so

There are four possible relationships:

Single Cause – Single Effect *If* you are caught speeding, *then* you will get a ticket.

Single Cause - Multiple Effects High fuel costs *result in* higher food prices, loss of jobs, and individual hardship.

Multiple Causes – Single Effect Survey, question, read, recite, and review *lead to* good comprehension.

Multiple Causes – Multiple Effects It was raining and I missed my ride; *therefore*, I got soaked and missed my test.

Notice how each of the transition words in italics indicates the result of an action.