

Transitional Devices

Without the use of transitional devices, the following paragraph appears disjointed and disorganized:

The Writing Center is a valuable resource for students who have trouble writing papers. It is also a good resource for students who are skilled at writing papers. These students might simply want to improve their writing further. The tutors welcome students of both varieties. They are at the Writing Center to help. Tutors are not simply there to check grammar.

When transitions are made from sentence to sentence, the same paragraph no longer sounds as if it were written by a robot:

The Writing Center is a valuable resource for students who have trouble writing papers, **and** it is also a good resource for students who are skilled at writing papers **but** want to improve their writing further. The tutors welcome students of both varieties, **because** they are at the Writing Center to help. **However**, tutors are not simply there to check grammar.

By adding transitions, the individual clauses add to each other. The ideas in a good paper, regardless of whether that paper is a literary analysis, a history essay, or a lab report, should intertwine and complement each other.

How do I know where to use a transitional device?

- 1) When sentences are closely related, they should usually be connected by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, etc.). For example, the first three sentences in the original paragraph address what kinds of students make use of the Writing Center. By connecting them with “and” and “but,” the relationship between the sentences becomes clearer to the reader.
- 2) The sentences “The tutors welcome students of both varieties” and “They are at the Writing Center to help” have a causal relationship. Writing Center tutors welcome students of both varieties *because* they are there to help. Therefore, it is logical to combine the two sentences with the word “because.”
- 3) The final sentence in the original paragraph addresses an idea that is opposed to the idea immediately before it. In this case, “however” is used to make a distinction between the two points. Without this transition, the final sentence appears to be out of context.

These are just a few common instances where transitional devices improve the clarity and flow of writing. For other instances, you may have to use your own judgment, but these should serve you well.

Here is a list of common transitional devices:

Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3
and	because	however
but	consequently	although
also	as a result	in spite of
furthermore	thus	despite
as a result	therefore	even though
in other words	so	whereas