

Cohesion and Transitions

Transitions are the “glue” that holds a piece of writing together. Writing that lacks appropriate transitions seems choppy, disconnected and illogical. Below are two paragraphs—one without transitions and one with transitions. Read out loud and see the difference.

Without Transitions

Napoleon certainly made a change for the worse by leaving his small kingdom of Elba. He went back to Paris, and he abdicated for a second time. He fled to Rochefort in hope of escaping to America. He gave himself up to the English captain of the ship Bellerophon. He suggested that the Prince Regent grant him asylum, and he was refused. All he saw of England was the Devon coast and Plymouth Sound as he passed on to the remote island of St. Helena. He died on May 5, 1821, at the age of fifty-two.

With Transitions

Napoleon certainly made a change for the worse by leaving his small kingdom of Elba. After Waterloo, he went back to Paris, and he abdicated for a second time. A hundred days after his return from Elba, he fled to Rochefort in hope of escaping to America. Finally, he gave himself up to the English captain of the ship Bellerophon. Once again, he suggested that the Prince Regent grant him asylum, and once again, he was refused. In the end all he saw of England was the Devon coast and Plymouth Sound as he passed on to the remote island of St. Helena. After six years of exile, he died on May 5, 1821, at the age of fifty-two.

--Norman Mackenzie, The Escape from Elba

The transitions in the second example help the reader understand:

- the time sequence
- the logic
- the organization
- the relation of one idea to another

Transitions for All Occasions!

To Signify Sequence or Addition

again, also, besides, first . . .second . . .third, furthermore, in addition, moreover, one . . . another, too

To Signal Time

afterward, as soon as, at first, at the same time, before, earlier, finally, in the meantime, later, meanwhile, next, now, soon, subsequently, then, until

To Signal Comparison

also, by the the same token, in comparison, likewise, similarly

To Signal Contrast

although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, instead, meanwhile, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on one hand . . .on the other hand, still, whereas, yet, conversely

To Introduce Examples

for example, for instance, namely, specifically, thus

To Signal the Narrowing of Focus

after all, indeed, in fact, in other words, in particular, specifically, that is

To Introduce Conclusions or Summaries

as a result, consequently, in conclusion, in other words, in summary
therefore, thus, to conclude, finally

To Signal Concession to Another Perspective

admittedly, certainly, granted, naturally, of course

To Introduce Causes or Effects

accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, hence, since, so, then, therefore