

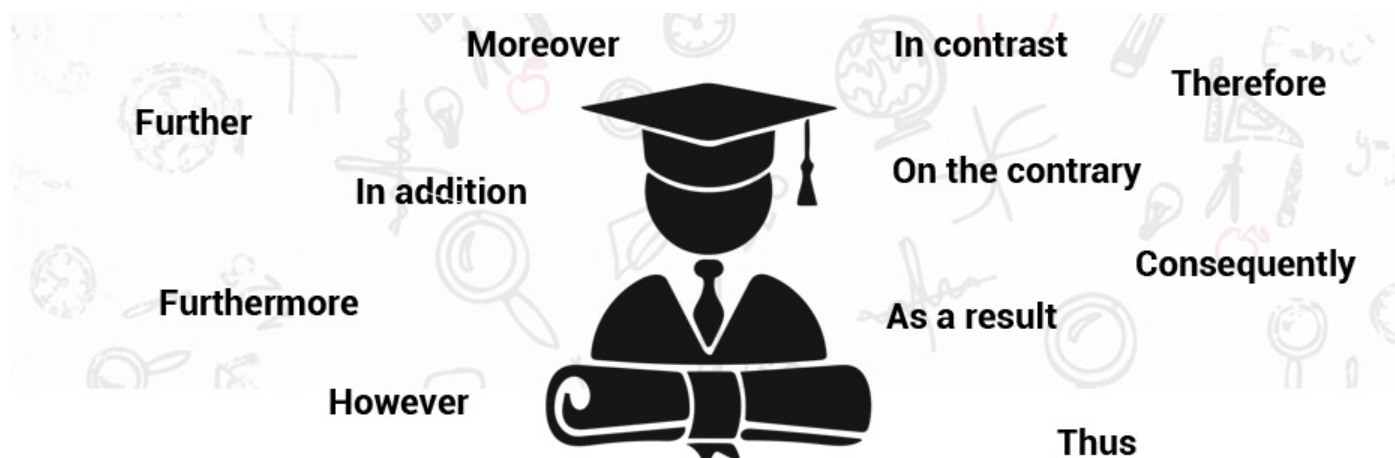
Therefore or However? Making Effective Use of Transitional Words & Phrases in Academic Writing

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A good paper is well structured and provides a coherent, clear flow of ideas. The writer should show how each idea relates to the other ideas that are discussed before and after it. To achieve this cohesion, it is a good practice to use transitional phrases at the start of some sentences, in order to link the upcoming idea to the previous one.



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Transitional phrases help readers understand why a new idea is being introduced and what role it serves in the paper: i.e., whether the new idea serves as a specific example illustrating the previous idea, or perhaps builds on or presents an opposing viewpoint to something that was discussed earlier.

Below are some common phrases used at the start of a sentence. When selecting a transitional phrase, it is important to consider the context. Read not only the sentence you would like to add a transition to but also the previous one or two sentences. Think about the relationship between the previous ideas and the new one.

Introducing Examples

To introduce an example, use one of the following phrases:

- *For example*
- *For instance*

You might write, “*Some participants in the study did not understand the task. For example, one participant pressed the Enter button after every stimulus.*” In this case, the second sentence provides an example of the idea presented in the first sentence. One participant’s decision to press the Enter button is a specific case showing that some participants did not understand the study task.

Adding to or Building on the Same View

To introduce an idea or information that builds on the same theme as the last sentence or group of sentences, consider using one of the following transitions:

- *In addition*
- *Moreover*
- *Further*

- *Furthermore*

For instance, to discuss the theme of problems in a study's task completion, you might write, "*Some participants in the study did not understand the task. Further, they did not have enough time to read the words on the computer screen.*" Here, the two sentences introduce separate ideas that fall under the same theme, problems in the study task. The first sentence presents one problem (i.e., not understanding the task), and the second sentence presents another problem (i.e., not having enough time to read).

Introducing an Opposing View

These phrases show that the new sentence provides a different or opposing idea from what precedes it.

- *However*
- *On the other hand*
- *In contrast*
- *On the contrary*

For example, to describe contrasting behavior that appeared among participants in a study, you could write, "*Some participants in the study did not understand the task. In contrast, others understood the instructions easily.*"

Showing Causation and Logical Relationships

Various transitional words and phrases can be used to indicate that an idea or event is a result of, or a consequence of, something else. A list is provided below.

- *Thus*
- *Therefore*
- *Consequently*
- *As a result*

"*Thus*" means "in this way." It's used when the preceding idea describes the manner/method in which the next idea is accomplished. For example, one can write, "*The new program is open to people of all ages. Thus, it expands the number of eligible applicants.*"

"*Therefore*," "*consequently*," and "*as a result*" mean that what follows is a logical result of something that was described beforehand: e.g., "*The new program is open to people of all ages. Therefore, many more people can apply*" or "*Many people applied to the government's new program. As a result, the application review is taking a long time.*"

Summarize

At the end of a paragraph, section, or article, you may wish to summarize what you have discussed. The following phrases can be used to provide readers with a clue that you are moving from the discussion itself to a synopsis.

- *In conclusion*
- *In summary*

Avoiding “And” and “But”

It's grammatical to use “and” or “but” at the start of a sentence. However, doing this gives the paper an informal or casual, conversational tone. In scholarly papers, it is best to use more formal choices instead. Look for instances of “and” at the start of a sentence and replace them with other transitions such as “*in addition*,” “*further*,” “*furthermore*,” or “*moreover*.” Similarly, replace “but” at the start of a sentence with “*however*” or “*yet*.” Alternatively, see if the sentence fits into the paragraph well without any transitional phrase at all. (Note that “and” and “but” are entirely appropriate for joining clauses within the same sentence; this recommendation is to avoid using them at the start of a sentence.)

Additional Notes

The lists above provide just a few of the most common transitional phrases authors use in academic papers. Finally, remember that it is not necessary to have a transitional phrase at the start of every sentence. Readers also draw clues about how ideas are connected to each other based on their position in the paragraph. Starting each sentence with a transitional phrase may distract readers from the overall content. Therefore, use transitions where it is logical and helpful.

References

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