

## Patterns of Organization

Effective communication begins with a clearly organized set of ideas following a logical, consistent pattern. Thus, one of the most important decisions a writer makes concerns the pattern of organization that is used to structure and order information.

To help organize ideas, writers use transitions—words or phrases authors use to show relationships between or within sentences and between paragraphs to make their ideas clear.

There are many patterns a writer can use to organize his/her ideas. To understand patterns of organization or relationships look for words or phrases that signal a particular type of organizational pattern being used such as:

### Words That Show an Addition

Also referred to as a “list of items,” these transitions tell you that the writer is presenting two or more ideas that continue along the same line of thought. They introduce ideas that add to a thought already mentioned. Here is a short list of words that show an addition.

and	also	another
in addition	moreover	next
first of all	second	third
furthermore	last of all	finally

An example using also:

My friend Ellen is so safety-conscious that she had her wooden front door replaced with a steel one. **Also**, she had iron bars inserted on all her apartment windows.

An example using furthermore:

By recycling, our township has saved thousands of dollars in landfill expenses. **Furthermore**, we have made money by selling recycled glass, paper, and metal.

### Words That Show a Cause and Effect Relationship

Cause and effect transitions signal that the author is describing results or effects. They tell us what happened or will happen because something else happened. Below is a short list of words that signal cause and effect.

thus  
as a result  
therefore

because  
consequently  
so

since  
if...then  
accordingly

An example using because:

My sister became a vegetarian **because** she doesn't want to eat anything that had a mother.

An example using if... then:

**If** you download music illegally, **then** there is a chance you will have to pay a fine or even serve jail time.

An example using as a result:

My boss's correspondence had built up while he was on vacation. **As a result**, I've been typing letters for the last two days.

## Words That Show a Comparison

These transitions signal that the author is pointing out a similarity between two subjects. They tell us that the second idea is like the first one in some way.

like  
likewise  
similarly  
as

just like  
in like manner  
in a similar fashion  
just as

equally  
in the same way

An example using similarly:

Outdoor floodlights make a home safer and more attractive; **similarly**, landscaping can be planned to increase both a home's security and its appeal.

An example using just like:

When movie makers have a hit, they tend to repeat the winning idea in their next movie instead of trying something new, **just like** certain authors who keep writing the same type of story.

An example using in like manner:

When individuals communicate, they are more likely to solve their problems. **In like manner**, countries can best solve their problems through communication.

## Words That Show a Contrast

These transitions signal a change in the direction of a writer's thought. They tell us that a new idea will be different in a significant way from the previous one.

but	yet	still
in contrast	instead	although
conversely	on the other hand	on the contrary
nevertheless	even though	despite
however	in spite of	

An example using however:

Some people think they have to exercise every day to stay in shape. **However**, three workouts a week are all they need to do.

An example using on the other hand:

There are those who look upon eating as something to be done quickly, so they can get on to better things. **On the other hand**, there are people who think eating is one of the better things.

An example using on the contrary:

Professional writers don't wait for inspiration. **On the contrary**, they stick to a strict schedule of writing.

## Words That Emphasize or Clarify

These words signal that the author is about to clarify or interpret a certain point. They tell us that the second statement is an expansion of a previous one.

clearly	obviously	of course
evidently	certainly	as a matter of fact
in fact	to be sure	undoubtedly
in other words	truly	

An example using in fact:

I hate sardines. **In fact**, if sardines were being served for dinner, I'd be at McDonald's.

An example using **clearly**

Research has shown that students do better when their teachers expect them to do well. **Clearly**, a lot of teachers have low expectations.

An example using **evidently**:

Before the '88 presidential election, journalists didn't report on politicians' sex lives. Evidently, journalistic standards have changed.

### **Words That Show Illustration, or Example**

These transitions indicate that an author will provide one or more examples to illustrate and clarify a given idea. They tell us that the second idea is an example of the first.

for example  
to illustrate  
once

for instance  
specifically  
to be specific

as an illustration  
such as  
including

An example using for instance:

My grandmother doesn't hear well anymore. **For instance**, whenever I say, "Hi, Granny," she answers, "Fine, just fine."

An example using such as:

There are various ways you can save money, **such as** bringing lunch to work and automatically putting aside a small portion of your check each week.

An example using once:

My cousin Dave will do anything on a dare. **Once** he showed up for a family dinner wearing only swimming trunks and a snorkeling mask.

### **Words That Show Location (Spatial Order)**

Location transitions show relationships in space. They tell us where something is in relation to something else.

next to  
inside  
across  
over  
in the middle of  
in front of  
outside  
beneath

under  
on the other side of  
in back of  
opposite  
behind  
beyond  
at the end of  
above

on top of  
near  
far  
ahead of  
below  
nearby  
within  
between

An example using in back of:

On the wall **in back of** my daughter's bed are twelve pictures of Beyoncé.

An example using at the end of:

"**At the end** of the maze," said the genie, "is a basket of pearls."

An example using beyond:

You have to go quite **beyond** the city limits to see a crystal-clear sky with all its stars.

## Words That Summarize or Conclude

These words signal that the author is about to summarize, or come to a conclusion. They tell us that the idea that follows sums up what has gone before it.

in summary

all in all

to sum up

to conclude

in conclusion

in brief

on the whole

in other words

ultimately

in short

An example using in brief:

At the banquet, the candidate for state senator spoke for an hour and a half without interruption. He finally concluded by saying, "**In brief**, ladies and gentlemen, vote for me."

An example using all in all:

The governor, ending his speech on an optimistic note, said, "**All in all**, we have laid the groundwork for a stronger economy in the coming year."

An example using to sum up

After a twenty-minute analysis of my financial situation, my accountant told me, "**To sum up**, Mr. Mills, you're broke."

## Words That Show a Time, or Chronological, Order

These transitions indicate a time relationship. They tell us when something happened in relation to something else.

first

then

until

next

before

immediately

as

now

since

while

during

soon

often

after

previously

An example using first and then:

**First**, I skim the pages of the television guide to see what movies will be on.

**Then**, I circle the ones I want to record on the DVD burner.

An example using as:

**As** I got ready to go home, my boss asked me to sweep the stock-room floor.

An example using during:

**During** World War II, meat was rationed.