

# Analyzing Transitional Language

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## *Connections*

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### **Have you ever...**

- Told someone you agreed with some things they said, but needed to explain the ways in which you disagreed?
- Tried to explain to a child that, although they were having a fun time, it was still time for bed?
- Needed to emphasize your point again and again?

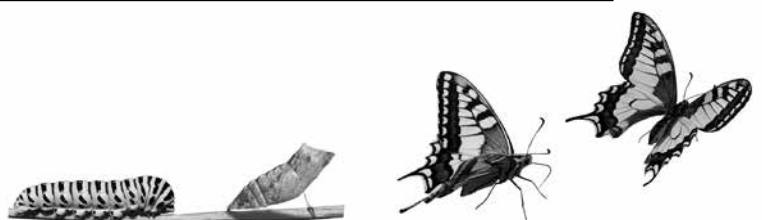
These are situations in which transitions communicate a change in meaning. A transition indicates a shift from one idea to a new and somehow different idea. Different transitional words and phrases indicate what kind of change is happening.

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By understanding the meaning of a transitional word or phrase, you can shift your thinking to analyze the change in the idea discussed.

These are some common functions of transitions:

<b>Refine Meaning</b>	Shifts the meaning of the author's idea, not completely, but slightly, including clarifying with contrasting ideas
<b>Emphasize Ideas</b>	Restates, adds to, or shows agreement with an idea
<b>Reinforce Purpose</b>	Reconnects with the author's purpose





## Identify Transitions and Their Purpose

Below are some examples of some common transitional words and phrases and how they are used in a text.

Transitional Words/Phrases	How They Are Used
Otherwise, to clarify, however, nevertheless, although	Refines meaning
Specifically, especially, in particular, furthermore, additionally, immediately, next	Emphasizes ideas
Therefore, ultimately, accordingly, in conclusion, so you see	Reinforces purpose

Read the following passage and answer the following questions about transitional language.

### Lavender Growth in the Northern Hemisphere

The lavender plant grows easily in northern climates. Lavender is hardy and drought resistant, and farmers enjoy a large market for lavender oils, perfumes, lotions, and other household goods. Although they are drought-tolerant, lavender plants need to be watered until their roots are established. Lavender plants need to be planted in the springtime. As soon as the days get longer, the lavender will begin to flower.

### Identify the Transitions

When you examine a passage for transitional language, look for transitions. What words or phrases (or even sentences) does the writer use to move from one idea to another?

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1. What transitions do you notice in the passage?

You might notice the transition word “although” in the third sentence and the phrase “as soon as the days get longer” in the last sentence.

### **Identify Functions of Transitions**

When you find a transition, ask yourself, what does it mean? What kind of a change in ideas is the author indicating?

- ? 2. What is the function of transitional language in the following sentence?

Although they are drought-tolerant, lavender plants need to be watered until their roots are established.

The purpose is to refine meaning. The transitional word “although” places limits on the fact that the plants are drought-tolerant.

- ? 3. What is the function of transitional language in the following sentence?

As soon as the days get longer, the lavender will begin to flower.

The purpose of this transitional phrase is to show time or sequence, emphasizing the sequence of the events as they unfold.

### **Connect the Transition to Meaning**

Understanding transitions helps you understand the author’s meaning. What is the purpose of the transition? What kind of new idea is coming? Compare the meaning of the phrase or sentence following the transition to the phrase or sentence with or before the transition.

- ? 4. How do the transitions “although” and “as soon as the days get longer” add meaning?

The word “although” tells the reader that the author will give more detailed information about the lavender plant’s need for water. “As soon as the days get longer” shows a time when something is happening and connects the time when the plants flower to the time they are planted (the springtime). Both of these transitions indicate to the reader that the author is giving more detailed information.



**Read the sentence or sentences and then answer the questions about transitions.**

- ★ 1. Because lavender blooms in early summer, spring is the best time of year to purchase small lavender starts at your local nursery.

a. What is the transition in this sentence, and what is its function?




b. How does the transition affect the meaning of the sentence?

- ★★ 2. Plant lavender while the weather is still cool. Otherwise, they won't have enough time to establish their roots before the heat of summer begins.

a. What is the transition in these sentences, and what is its function?

b. How does the transition affect the meaning of the sentences?

c. Why would the author include a transition in these sentences?

3.  Ultimately, lavender is the perfect addition to any garden.
- What is the transition in this sentence, and what is its function?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Where might you expect to find this sentence in a passage? Why?
4.  Remember to plant *after* any frost.
- What is the transition in this sentence, and what is its function?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - How does the transitional language affect the sentence's meaning?
5.  Spaying and neutering pets keeps the population of stray, uncared-for animals more manageable. Therefore, dogs and cats should be spayed and neutered before they reach puberty.
- “Specifically, dogs and cats should be spayed and neutered before they reach puberty.”  
How does the meaning change when a different transitional word (specifically) is used for the last sentence?

6. Spaying and neutering prevents costs to the community associated with feral animals. (Additionally / By the way), spaying and neutering prevents male dogs from developing aggressive habits that are difficult to break.

Which is the most appropriate transition? Why?

7. Spaying and neutering should be mandatory for pets. (For this reason / Otherwise), the dog and cat population will become unmanageable. The best way to end euthanasia of cats and dogs is to prevent it.

Which is the most appropriate transition? Why?

8. (In particular / Although) some might feel it's unfair to "alter" animals, that it's "unnatural," the pets feel no pain after a minor recovery period and are more likely to avoid aggressive behavior as adults.

Which is the most appropriate transition? Why?

9. The arguments in favor of spaying and neutering provide the most good to both society and individuals. (Clearly / Nevertheless) it is best for both pets and their owners to have dogs and cats spayed and neutered as soon as possible.

Which is the most appropriate transition? Why?



## Check Your Skills

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

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### Chemosynthesis and Photosynthesis

Life can't exist without energy. Organisms like plants create food that other organisms, like animals, can use for energy. In most ecosystems, food is created through photosynthesis, a process that uses sunlight to convert carbon dioxide and water into sugar and oxygen. However, organisms in some environments use a different process to create food: chemosynthesis. Where there is insufficient sunlight, such as in the depths of the ocean, some organisms have developed way to use chemical energy to convert inorganic carbon, often in carbon dioxide or methane, into food. Together, photosynthesis and chemosynthesis create the fuel that feeds all of Earth's living creatures.

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1. What is the purpose of the phrase “in most ecosystems”?
  - a. It provides a contrast between this sentence and the previous sentence.
  - b. It introduces the idea that another process besides photosynthesis is used in some ecosystems.
  - c. It introduces the idea that photosynthesis isn't always used to create food, but sometimes has another purpose.
  - d. It provides a link to the author's main idea, that photosynthesis creates fuel.
  
2. What would be the effect of changing the word “however” to the word “additionally”?
  - a. It would imply that chemosynthesis is equally as prevalent as photosynthesis.
  - b. It would imply that chemosynthesis is not an energy-producing process.
  - c. It would imply that chemosynthesis is the author's main idea in the passage, while photosynthesis is secondary.
  - d. It would imply that chemosynthesis further develops the idea of energy production, instead of contrasting with photosynthesis.
  
3. What is the purpose of the phrase “where there is insufficient sunlight”?
  - a. It qualifies where chemosynthesis happens, giving additional information.
  - b. It links chemosynthesis to the author's main idea.
  - c. It contrasts chemosynthesis to non-food-producing processes.
  - d. It expresses uncertainty about the efficiency of chemosynthesis.

Use the following transitions to fill in the blanks in the passage.

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First      Particularly      Additionally      Ultimately      Nevertheless

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4.  Traveling with babies and small children can be challenging. While they can be excited to go to a new place, getting there can be trying for both the children and the parent. Babies and small children are more schedule-dependent than most adults. There are a few important key tricks to remember which make it easier to travel with small children.
- a. \_\_\_\_\_, they may be somewhere new, but their small stomachs can't go as long between meals as an adult's. Always bring a variety of snacks, and be generous about sharing.
  - b. Parents can find bedtime \_\_\_\_\_ trying. Crossing time zones, traveling in cars or trains, and trying to stay still for longer periods than usual can all make it difficult for children to settle down. To address this, parents can try to duplicate bedtime rituals as much as possible. If possible, dress children in pajamas, read a book, and sing a song.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_, children can be sensitive to unfamiliar and loud sounds. Some parents have found it helpful to use earplugs or noise-canceling earphones to manage the noise and allow babies and young children to sleep.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_, children can be a joy as travel companions. Follow this advice and discover that the journey can be as enjoyable as the destination!
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_, traveling with small children can be incredibly rewarding. Their sense of wonder sees the smallest details in new sights, sounds, and experiences.

### *Remember the Concept*

Transitional language can show changes and shifts in meaning. To understand these shifts, first determine the function of the transitional word itself. Also, look at the sentence following the transitional word for context clues to the shift in meaning.



### Analyzing Transitional Language

#### Identify Transitions and Their Purpose

##### Practice It!

**1a.** Because

The word “because” refines meaning. It gives further information that explains why.

**1b.** In this sentence, the word “because” links the idea that lavender blooms in early summer with the idea that spring is the best time to purchase lavender. It creates a cause-and-effect relationship between the two ideas.

**2a.** Otherwise

The word “otherwise” refines meaning, giving further information about the correct time to plant lavender.

**2b.** In these sentences, the word “otherwise” shows the potential consequences of not planting lavender when the weather is cool. The relationship is between an action and the consequences if that action is not taken. It is similar to a cause-and-effect relationship, but the effect is an imagined result, if the reader doesn’t listen to the first sentence.

**2c.** The author includes a transition to show the way in which the second sentence supports the idea in the first sentence. Without the word “otherwise,” the relationship would be unclear.

**3a.** Ultimately

The transition “ultimately” reinforces the author’s purpose by tying the sentence to whatever came before it.

**3b.** You might expect to find this sentence at the end of a passage. The word “ultimately” indicates that the writer is summing up prior ideas.

**4a.** After

The transition refines meaning by indicating time.

**4b.** The transitional language connects the two parts of the sentence. It clarifies when to plant.

**5.** Answers will vary. The word “therefore” shows a conclusion that follows from the previous sentence. The word “specifically” indicates a detail. When “therefore” is used, the sentence that follows sounds like a concluding sentence that likely relates back to a main idea. When “specifically” is used, the sentence that follows sounds like a clarification or example, a refinement of the information that came before.

**6.** Additionally

“Additionally” is a more appropriate transition because the sentence gives further information about spaying and neutering. “By the way” is not appropriate because the language is more casual and because it implies something unrelated (or at least mostly unrelated) to the previous idea. “By the way” indicates an extra idea.

**7.** Otherwise

The word “otherwise” shows that the author will give an example of what will happen if the previous sentence or idea is ignored. “For this reason” shows a direct cause-and-effect relationship, which isn’t true in this case. The idea that spaying and neutering should be mandatory isn’t a reason that the dog and cat population will become unmanageable. The dog and cat population will become unmanageable **unless** spaying and neutering are manageable.

**8.** Although

The word “although” shows contrast between the idea that some might feel spaying and neutering is unfair and the idea that pets feel little pain and have positive results from spaying and neutering. The author is introducing an opposing idea and then giving contrasting information to counter the opposing argument. The word “although” shows the contrast.

**9.** Clearly

The term “clearly” indicates that the idea being introduced follows from the previous ideas. The word “nevertheless” would indicate contrast, which is inappropriate for these sentences.

### Check Your Skills

1. b. It introduces the idea that another process besides photosynthesis is used in some ecosystems.

The phrase “in most ecosystems” qualifies the idea that food is created through photosynthesis. It introduces the idea that photosynthesis only happens sometimes. This prepares the reader for the idea of chemosynthesis, which is introduced later.

2. d. It would imply that chemosynthesis further develops the idea of energy production, instead of contrasting with photosynthesis.

The word “however” creates contrast, contrasting the function of chemosynthesis to create food with the previously described process, photosynthesis. The word “additionally” is more neutral, describing chemosynthesis as another process, further developing the idea of energy production.

3. a. It qualifies where chemosynthesis happens, giving additional information.

The phrase “where there is insufficient sunlight” gives information about the conditions where chemosynthesis happens.

4a. First

The word “first” indicates sequence. This is the best choice for the first “important key tricks” in the article. “First” wouldn’t be appropriate for later paragraphs, since they aren’t first.

4b. Particularly

The word “particularly” means “especially.” This would indicate that bedtime is especially problematic. The placement of the word makes “additionally” incorrect. The word “additionally” would mean that bedtime is trying in addition to another time, but that does not fit with the rest of the passage.

4c. Additionally

The word “additionally” indicates another in a series of ideas, something additional. The author is giving additional information about something that may upset children: loud or unfamiliar noises.

4d. Nevertheless

The word “nevertheless” indicates contrast. The author is contrasting a list of problems with the benefit of traveling with children.

4e. Ultimately

The word “ultimately” indicates something that sums up previous idea and draws a final, or ultimate, conclusion. This is appropriate for the final paragraph of the passage.