Transitions

Transitional words and phrases are the glue that connects ideas that might otherwise seem disconnected or disjointed. They show how ideas in a paragraph or essay relate to one another by indicating logical connections. It’s sort of like connecting the dots. Without transitions, readers can be left feeling confused and bounced around.

Notice how choppy and fragmented this paragraph seems:

Music is an important part of my life. My friends and I love to go to concerts. This year we have seen Air Supply, Neil Diamond and a Journey tribute band called Wheel in the Sky. I dress up as my favorite musicians for Halloween. I went as Celine Dion one year. I went as Michael Jackson one year. I had someone ask for my autograph. I play music. I play the accordion and xylophone. I write music. I wrote an accordion adaptation of Billy Joel’s “Piano Man.” I played it at my church picnic. Without music, I would have nothing to talk about with my pen pal in Malaysia. Music gives me a reason to enjoy life.

Does the paragraph seem a little hard to follow? Let’s add some clarifying transitions to connect the dots:

Music is an important part of my life. First of all, my friends and I love to go to concerts. This year, for instance, we’ve seen Air Supply, Neil Diamond and a Journey tribute band called Wheel in the Sky. I also enjoy dressing up as my favorite musicians for Halloween. For example, I went as Celine Dion one year, and I went as Michael Jackson another. I even had someone ask for my autograph. Additionally, I play music, specifically the accordion and xylophone. I even write music. I once wrote an accordion adaptation of Billy Joel’s “Piano Man,” and afterward I played it at my church picnic. Finally, without music, I would have nothing to talk about with my pen pal in Malaysia. In short, music gives me a reason to enjoy life.

See how much better the ideas flow together?
Handy List of Transitions

**Similarity:** also, in the same way, just as...so too, likewise, similarly, comparatively, equally so, in the same vein,

**Exception/contrast:** although this may be true, but, however, in spite of, on the one hand ... on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet, even though, regardless

**Sequence/order:** to begin with, first, second, third, ... next, then, finally, again, still

**Time:** after, afterward, at last, before, currently, presently, during, earlier, prior to, immediately, later, meanwhile, in the meantime, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then, eventually, finally, lastly

**Example:** for example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate, to clarify, in other words, that is to say, notably, in fact

**Emphasis:** even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly

**Place/position:** above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there

**Cause/effect:** accordingly, consequently, as a result, hence, so, therefore, thus, provided that, owing to, in order to, so long as, if...then, unless, due to

**Additional information:** additionally, again, also, and, as well, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, then, not only...but also

**Conclusion:** finally, in a word, in brief, in the end, on the whole, thus, in essence, ultimately, as can be seen, all things considered, as has been noted