

Transition Words

Transition words, also referred to as conjunctive adverbs, are found at the beginning of a sentence and create smooth flow from one sentence to the next. Transition words can be considered the glue that connects two related ideas. These words can be used to show time, make a comparison or contrast, demonstrate a cause and effect, make a conclusion, show sequence, or demonstrate similarity. Some common transition words are provided in the following box.

however	therefore	thus	furthermore
meanwhile	moreover	surprisingly	finally
subsequently	consequently	hence	accordingly

Connecting Two Sentences

Each of the above words can be used at the beginning of a sentence to transition smoothly from the previous sentence. You can refer to <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/02> for a comprehensive list of transition words. The following examples show transition words acting as the glue between two related sentences.

Bobby did not like going to the dentist. However, it was something that just had to be done.

The technicians tuned the guitars and prepared the microphones. Meanwhile, the musicians prepared themselves backstage.

Georgia's driving test was in five minutes, and this time she was more confident than ever. Finally, she would be able to get her driver's license.

As you may have noticed, the underlined transition word in each of the above examples is followed by a comma. Remember to use a comma to separate the transition word from the rest of the sentence.

Connecting Two Independent Clauses with a Semicolon

Transition words can also be used when connecting two independent clauses with a semicolon. An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence. To use transition words in this way, your sentence structure must follow this model:

Independent clause + semicolon + transition word + comma + independent clause.

Note that when a semicolon is used instead of a period, a comma will still be used to separate the transition word from the rest of the sentence. This rule is also shown in the examples below.

The truck driver knew that he was too tired to continue driving; thus, he checked into a hotel for the night.

Barbara returned home after curfew last night; consequently, she is grounded for two weeks.

Activity 1

Fill in each of the blanks with an appropriate transition word from the list below.

first

nevertheless

otherwise

therefore

meanwhile

however

1. Stephanie cooked the carrots and washed the lettuce. _____, her brother prepared the broccoli.
2. Jane wanted to drive Tanya and Michael to the mall; _____, she only had two seats in her car.
3. Rodger was a chocolate fanatic, and he ate two servings of dessert every night. _____, he began to grow overweight.
4. Julia was almost ready to perform the experiment. _____, she would need to run tests on the control group.
5. Mother said I needed to finish all of my chores. _____, I would not be able to go to the movies with my friends.
6. Katy's mother, father, and brother are all vegetarians; _____, Katy eats meat every day.

Activity 2

For each of the following sentences, indicate whether the underlined transition word shows time, similarity, contrast, or cause and effect. Also, correctly punctuate the sentences.

1. I would love to stay and help you clean your room however I think I hear my mother calling me.

2. The weather is supposed to be terrible on Tuesday thus all flights out of Chicago will most likely be canceled.
3. Tanya went to the shop to get her nails done meanwhile Sarah and her mother went shopping for dresses at the mall.
4. The steak was delicious likewise the scallops were marvelous.

Answer Key for Activity 1

1. Meanwhile
2. however
3. Therefore
4. First
5. Otherwise
6. nevertheless

Answer Key for Activity 2

1. contrast
. However, *or*
; however,
2. cause and effect
; thus, *or*
. Thus,
3. time
. Meanwhile, *or*
; meanwhile,
4. similarity
. Likewise, *or*
; likewise,

References

Brizee, Allen and Dana Driscoll. "Commas after Introductions." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. 4 January 2013. Web.