

Reviews for the Editing Process

TRANSITIONS

Transitions are words and phrases that link together actions, objects, and ideas within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs. Transitions are an important part of creating **flow** within your paper, and they also help to clarify your meaning by making the relationships between words and sentences more precise; while on the other hand, writing without transitions often sounds incoherent and jarring. Here are some examples of transitional words and expressions.

When you want to show...	Use...
Addition moreover,	furthermore, besides, likewise, also, too, finally, last, additionally
Cause	since, because
Comparison	similarly, likewise
Concession	although, despite
Condition	unless, provided that, if
Contrast	but, yet, however, nevertheless, in contrast, on the contrary, nonetheless, whereas, even though, although, otherwise, on the other hand
Exception	except
Exemplification	for example, for instance
Intensification	indeed, in fact
Place	where, here, near, beyond
Purpose	to (in order to), to this end
Repetition	in other words, as I have said, as previously mentioned, as stated above
Result	therefore, thus, consequently, as a result
Summary	in conclusion, in short, all in all, overall, finally
Time	when, after, before, until, as long as, meanwhile, immediately, soon, afterward, then

PERSONAL PRONOUN USE AND STYLE

Often in academic writing, some instructors will ask that you avoid using personal pronouns such as I and you. For example, you may be tempted to write a sentence like the following one.

I think that Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* is the greatest book ever written.

Although this sentence is not grammatically incorrect, you can easily remove the personal pronoun and retain the same message.

Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* is the greatest book ever written.

Your instructor will understand that this is your opinion because you are writing the sentence. Furthermore, you may be tempted to use the word you in a sentence because we often speak in that format. For example,

When you get a tattoo in a prominent place on your body, your parents may cut you off financially and not speak to you for many months.

This sentence is not wrong; however, like the I example, using the personal pronoun you may be inappropriate in certain contexts. Furthermore, since the use of you implies direct address of the reader, the writer may be making hasty or unfounded assumptions about his or her audience. For instance, not everyone gets tattoos, and not all parents are offended by this choice; some parents even have tattoos themselves. So, to fix the use of you in this sentence, the writer could use the following.

When teenagers get tattoos in prominent bodily locations, some parents are angry about this choice and may react negatively.

Personal pronouns usually are considered appropriate for narrative essays and informal writing assignments, such as journal entries and letters. (See "Getting Started" for more information about different writing assignments and teaching styles.) **Always be sure to ask about your instructor's preference since this style matter varies from instructor to instructor.**

PRONOUN BIAS

In the past, it was considered appropriate to use male pronouns whenever referring to groups containing both sexes or when referring to an indefinite person. Today, however, most people consider this exclusion of women to be biased and offensive. You should therefore be aware of what pronouns are appropriate in respect to gender. For example, a sentence such as:

Everyone has his own idea of freedom.

seemingly implies that only males have their own ideas about freedom. In order to include females, this sentence may be rewritten with both male and female pronouns, as in:

Everyone has *his or her* own idea of freedom.

This sentence may also be rewritten by changing the singular subject "everyone" to the plural subject "all people" so that you can then use the plural, gender-neutral pronoun "their":

All people have *their* own ideas of freedom.

In this way, all people are truly included (which is the true meaning of the sentence) rather than just males.

(Note also that the singular noun "idea" changes to its plural form of "ideas" in order to agree in number with both "all people" and "their.")

REVIEW OF DICTION

The English language consists of roughly 500,000 words, and the average speaker knows 20,000. Use words to your advantage; write with precision, and say what you mean.

Avoid wordiness. Your teachers know when you are using filler phrases. They are often cliché and dull your writing. Here are some frequently used “fillers” that you can alter or avoid completely:

Simplify these phrases

In this day and age → Nowadays, today

In order to → To

On a daily basis → Daily

At this point in time → Now, today

End result → Result

Avoid these entirely

Due to the fact that → Just state the fact

In my opinion I think that → The paper belongs to you, so we already know it is your opinion. Reminding us is redundant.

For the purpose of → Everything you write has a purpose, so this phrase is unnecessary.

Avoid expletives. “There” and “it” are expletives; these words literally have no meaning and decrease the power of your writing.

- There are several excellent reasons why people should not smoke. (What is “there”?)
Instead: People should not smoke for several reasons.
- It is getting hot in here, so take off all your clothes. (What is “it”?)
Instead: The heat is so oppressive that I must disrobe.

Avoid simply using “this” or “that” without a specific noun to clarify the reference.

- This idea discredits everything written by Shakespeare.
Instead: The theory that Shakespeare did not author all of his works discredits his literary career.
- That was uncalled for.
Instead: Her rude behavior was uncalled for.

Avoid unspecific verbs and passive voice. Using strong verbs helps the reader understand exactly what you mean and prevents the formation of –ence and –ion nouns.

- I have a preference for chocolate.
Instead: I prefer chocolate.
- We need to have a discussion about the project.
Instead: We need to discuss the project.

Avoid general, abstract words. These words are subject to the reader’s interpretation, so they add little meaning to your writing.

- The dinner was interesting.

Instead: I had never eaten Thai food before, and once I got over the spiciness, I really enjoyed the peanut and sesame flavors.

- The class was bad.

Instead: The professor's lectures about granite were terribly boring.

Avoid “gobbledygook”. Use words you are familiar with and comfortable using. Remember, no words are exact synonyms—use the thesaurus carefully or not at all.

- to be cognizant → to know
- conversant with → familiar

Avoid slang or informal language. Slang is appropriate in informal dialogue or in narrative essays. However, in most formal writing, you should not use slang or internetspeak.