

Textbook Chapter

Using Transitions in Writing



Fig 1: [Chains Linking](#)

When creating a work of writing, it can be difficult to figure out how to connect your different ideas or sub-topics. The flow of your writing, or lack thereof, can make or break the effectiveness of your argument. Transitions are a critical part of any writing project, as they guide the reader's thought process and make sure that they can follow your purpose. These words or phrases help your writing smoothly move from one topic to the next.

As a first-year writing student, it is crucial that you are able to effectively use transitions in your projects so that the reader can follow your thought process. In this chapter, I will explain how transitions can be used in different scenarios, as well as offer strategies for creating a sense of flow throughout your writing process. Though they are often overlooked in writing, effective transitions are essential to helping your arguments be clearly conveyed and understood.

Transitions at Work

Typically, transitions come into play after you have brainstormed ideas, created an outline, and begun to work on your draft. When I was working on my most recent research paper, I didn't think about my transitions until after I had gathered my evidence and was ready to write my paragraphs. At this point, I hit a block. I wanted my writing to flow smoothly and for my main points to be effectively conveyed, but I was unsure how to arrange my evidence within each paragraph.

Transitions not only make your writing sound smoother, but in doing so, they establish logical relationships between your ideas. Forgetting to consider these relationships throughout your process not only can confuse you as the writer, but also your reader.

Planning Ahead

Let's go back a step and see where I could have avoided this confusion and writer's block. After doing some preliminary research, I established my main ideas and a few pieces of supporting evidence.

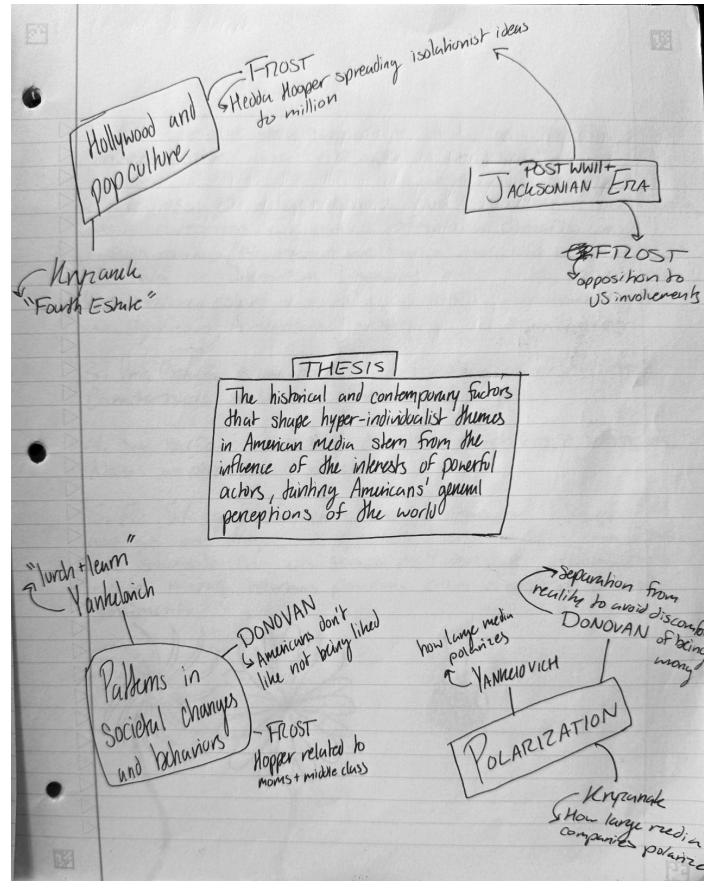


Fig 2: Brainstorming

After finding additional support for my main topics, I felt that my paragraphs and arguments were more solid. However, here is where I made my mistake: I had not thought about how I would *connect* my ideas into one cohesive paper. When writing for any project, it is important to remember that your arguments must all work together to support **one central thesis**. I had created the pieces of my puzzle, but I had no idea how to put them together.

At this point, I returned to this original brainstorming paper and wrote down the shared ideas between my main points, drawing arrows to show connections. With these relationships in mind, I was able to determine the most logical way to structure my paragraphs to ensure a smooth flow of ideas. For example, see how I smoothly concluded a paragraph about mainstream media and introduced my paragraph on polarization:

“...This use of media to spread nationalist ideas has since continued to play a vital role in the outcomes of American politics.

More recently, the growing connection between media, money, and politics has led to widespread polarization that has further developed the misunderstanding of global issues among the American people...”

I ended one paragraph by discussing how mainstream media continues to play a crucial role in society and then elaborated on how this idea has contributed to polarization. When writing, I find it helpful to consider the **“Known-New Contract”** Strategy.

The Known-New Contract

The known-new contract suggests that comprehension is increased when the topic position of a sentence contains information that links back to what the reader already knows and the stress position contains new information that the writer wants to emphasize.



Notice how the following example uses the known-new contract to create a coherent flow of ideas.

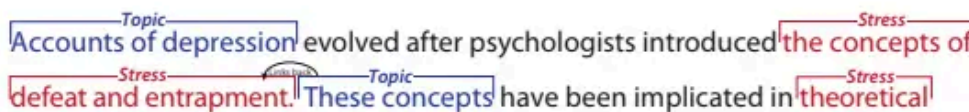


Fig 3: [Known-New Contract Visual](#)

With this strategy in mind, it is easier to think about how your ideas logically connect and how you can reference those relationships in your sentence structures to create smooth transitions. By seeing the relationship between my ideas, I was able to write sentences that felt natural and relevant rather than abrupt or confusing.

Tips and Tricks

Without smooth transitions, your writing can become difficult to follow, preventing your ideas from being effectively conveyed. Here are some strategies to help you create a flow in your writing:

#1: Reference a list of transitional phrases

If you are struggling to find the right wording to use in certain situations, it can be helpful to reference a list of sample words or phrases. Here are some example transitions for common relationships in writing:

Logical Relationship	Transitional Phrase
Sequence and Order	<i>First of all, Second; Next; Following; Subsequently</i>
Similarity	<i>In the same way; Similarly; Just as... so too</i>
Result/Consequence	<i>Therefore; Accordingly; In doing so; For this reason</i>
Contrast	<i>On the contrary; Nevertheless; In spite of; However</i>
Emphasis	<i>Without a doubt; In particular; Notably; More importantly</i>
Addition	<i>In addition to...; Along with; Not only... but also</i>
Conclusion	<i>Finally; On the whole; All things considered; To conclude</i>

#2: Plan ahead when organizing your ideas

When brainstorming for your next writing project, jot down relationships or shared ideas between your topics and sources. This helps you organize your thoughts logically and plan transitions for later versions of your writing. Considering these relationships from the start of the writing process keeps your ideas on track and connected to your main thesis.

#3: Peer review your work

When working on the same project for a long period of time, it can be difficult to see the flaws in our own work. Peer reviews help you gain a new perspective and develop your writing skills. According to a study from BYU, “training on how to review their peers’ papers helped (students) improve their own writing” ([BYU](#)). Evaluating your peers’ work while receiving feedback on your own can highlight new areas for improvement. Reading your writing out loud can also help you identify places where your ideas are disjointed and transitions are needed.

#4: Set yourself up for smooth transitions with concluding sentences

An effective concluding sentence should both wrap up the main ideas of the previous paragraph while preparing your reader for what comes next, continuing to set up your writing for success. I find it helpful to reference the Known-New Contract that I mentioned earlier when writing my conclusion and introductory sentences. This helps to introduce a new topic without confusing your reader.

Moving Forward

With practice, transitioning smoothly between ideas will become easier. Even the most experienced writers sometimes struggle with simple decisions like choosing between writing “In addition” or “Furthermore.” Thinking about transitions as a key aspect of writing encourages you to look more deeply into your subjects and consider the relationships between your ideas.

Whether you are writing your research paper or your review on a subject of your choice, strengthening the connections between your ideas is essential for crafting convincing, cohesive pieces of writing that will help you succeed in your first year writing course. Whatever your circumstances may be, life is full of changes. In writing and in life, strong transitions can help us navigate from one phase to the next.

Revision Project

REVISION KEY

Text highlighted in color: Added text not in original paper

- Orange: Structural Reorganization

- Blue: Credibility/Audience Connection

- Green: Expanding ideas for smoother Transitions

- Yellow: Developing Counter arguments

~~Strikethrough text:~~ Text deleted or moved to another part of paper

Text in blue: Annotations for changes

Isadora De Macedo

Professor Sarmah

English 1101

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Teaching a Man to Fish: Digital Literacy in the Modern Age

In recent decades, the internet has become a powerful force, influencing politics, media consumption, and education. Through effective persuasion strategies in advertisements and campaigns, powerful individuals and organizations can greatly impact public opinion and actions in their favor. For decades, news companies have used various techniques to grab the attention of their audiences and capitalize on it. The rise of the internet and social media has inflated this phenomenon to a new level that has come up with its own set of consequences. **To combat the threat of harmful misinformation spread online, we must address the lack of digital literacy in our population. Digital literacy is the ability to effectively and accurately comprehend, evaluate,**

create, and communicate information through technology (UOTP), which enables users to consume and curate information responsibly. (I moved my definition of Digital literacy to a spot earlier in my essay. This asserts my claim early on and clears up any confusion of definitions that readers may have while reading my paper.) As a professor in higher education, I have observed the gradual, yet undeniable growth of media as an influential factor in the everyday life of young people. Information that is shared online is rarely fact-checked, and few people care to second-guess their sources before believing what they hear. (I gave my credentials immediately after stating my claim to give some background to back up my claim.) When individuals are not well-versed in distinguishing between trustworthy and non-trustworthy sources, they are more inclined to act on their impulses and emotions, continuing to interact with and spread information that could potentially be false. (As a professor in higher education, I have observed the gradual, yet undeniable growth of media as an influential factor in the everyday life of young people. Information that is shared online is rarely fact-checked, and few people care to second-guess their sources before believing what they hear. The prevalence of misinformation and conspiracies that spread online make the internet a risky place to be for those who are not equipped to face these issues. As increasing numbers of people rely on social media as their primary source of news, the tainted or false information from unverified sources quickly spreads online, profoundly impacting the actions and beliefs of people across our nation.

I believe the root of this problem is a general lack of digital literacy. Digital literacy is the ability to effectively and accurately comprehend, evaluate, create, and communicate information through technology (UOTP), which enables users to consume and curate information responsibly. When individuals are not well-versed in distinguishing between trustworthy and non-trustworthy sources, they are more inclined to act on their impulses and emotions,

~~continuing to interact with and spread information that could potentially be false.~~ By addressing the lack of digital literacy in our society, we can change the trajectory of news and media, improve awareness, and allow people to learn strategies to form opinions based on reliable information rather than eye-catching statements that get thrown around online. The inability to detect and avoid misinformation is not only a threat to the general intelligence of the public, but to the security of our nation. Especially with the exponential growth of artificial intelligence in recent years, it is crucial that individuals develop their own fact checking skills before trusting what they see online. **If schools continue to ignore the threats of misguided behavior online,**

students will continue to have insufficient abilities to safely navigate the internet. (Adding this sentence addresses my audience(school officials) and their role in addressing my chosen issue)

Teaching skills and strategies for navigating sources online will equip people with the proper tools they need to identify red flags or signs of bias and be able to find reliable and objective information.

Inaccurate perceptions of events and information not only shape how people act politically and socially, but they have also led to a gradual decay of public awareness. **A clear example of this**

phenomenon occurred in January 2021, when the country witnessed how false conspiracies of a

fraudulent election rapidly spread to millions of people online. This spread of fear and rumors

online led ~~leading~~ to the insurrection of our Capitol, one of the largest domestic terrorist attacks

seen in the history of our country. ~~Studies show that the volume and speed of information sharing~~

~~make it almost impossible to control, giving individual users the responsibility to fact check their~~

~~own sources.~~ **This event was primarily orchestrated through public online platforms like**

Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter). These unregulated (Here I gave a more elaborate

introduction to my evidence to create a smoother transition.) **social media platforms have**

become a regular news source for millions of Americans. In 2024, a study conducted by the University of Wisconsin found that 52% of TikTok users, 59% of X users, and 57% of Truth Social users claimed to regularly use these sites as news sources (“Numbers, Facts and Trends”). Despite these high numbers, another study by UNESCO found that 62% of online content creators do not fact check before sharing information (“2/3 of Digital Content Creators”). These numbers show the critical gap between the abundant amount of information being consumed compared to the amount that is verified. Studies show that the volume and speed of information sharing make it almost impossible to control, giving individual users the responsibility to fact check their own sources

One of the greatest risks associated with social media and misinformation is the amount of young people being exposed to false and potentially harmful information without the proper knowledge of how to process or avoid it. As people are being introduced to the internet and social media at progressively younger ages,

(Here, I wrapped up my evidence and connected it to how this idea directly threatens the younger populations that are taught in schools) ~~younger people having access to the internet and social media,~~ it is important to teach digital literacy skills early on. As the primary place of education, schools should play a role in teaching these critical life skills.

Our education system has not adapted to the shift in news culture at the same pace as the rise of social media, leaving people unequipped to navigate the world of digital news. If we keep creating younger populations that are ill-equipped to face the challenges of the new digital age, the effects of misinformation will only continue to ripple into our political and social systems.

(Adding these phrases directly speaks to my audience—school officials. By directly speaking to them and their role in the issue I am trying to address, they are more likely to be encouraged to act) A modernization of course curriculums and student experiences can allow students to enter

the real world with a better understanding of the systems and institutions that influence the world around them. Some argue that it is the parents' responsibility to teach their own children these online safety skills, but if schools maintain this hands-off approach, it is unlikely that our society will see any widespread consensus that leads to change. Until now, some even argue that parents who are not aware of the scale of the danger of the internet have amplified this issue, raising their children to become reliant on technology without teaching them proper skills on how to safely use it. (One of the main counter arguments to establishing a digital literacy course in schools is that it should be the parents' responsibility to teach their kids these skills. Adding this section to address that argument strengthens my point and encourages my audience to agree with my ideas instead.) By teaching kids and teenagers how to cross-check information across multiple sources and engage with news that is not tailored to their personal opinions, the next generation of leaders and civilians will be more capable of forming well-educated opinions based on truth. If middle schools and high schools across the country prioritize teaching these crucial life skills to their students, our society will be able to engage in more civil discourse that will lead to genuine progress, rather than distrust and alienation.

Some individuals and companies have attempted to address these issues related to digital literacy and acknowledgement of media bias. While there have been some news sources ~~websites~~ like Ground News and AllSides that make their users aware of bias in ~~by providing~~ news articles on the same stories, but from different sides of the political spectrum. This strategy fails to address the fact that (I mentioned Ground News and AllSides in my previous draft, however now I am connecting it to my previous paragraph and smoothly integrating it into my larger point about failed attempts to address this issue. This keeps my reader on the same page and allows them to follow my line of thinking) the average person is unlikely to cut out

mainstream media completely from their lives, especially since social media has become integrated into daily life. Even after bias is acknowledged, many people are unaware of the implications and harms of it, or how to find alternative sources. Others have attempted to address this issue through education in schools, however there have been notable setbacks. In Pennsylvania, Governor Josh Shapiro funded a toolkit through the Pennsylvania Department of Education that offers resources for “recognizing biases, distinguishing credible information from misinformation, and (using) digital spaces responsibly” (“At Middletown School”). While This program is certainly a step in the right direction, but it is still in its early phases, and the toolkit itself is hard to navigate for a younger audience. It is important that in addressing this issue in our society, younger audiences can feel supported and encouraged in their learning journey. Instead, teaching digital literacy skills to young people through engaging activities that allow them to interact with their peers is a much more effective and reliable long-term strategy to advance digital literacy. (These phrases explain why Shapiro’s attempts were not as successful as my proposal is expected to be and specifically discuss where his plan falls short)-instead of attempting to restrict what they see by channeling information through one website or just giving them a list of tips.

For these reasons, I believe that the most effective way to address the lack of digital literacy is through a multi-step program that should be implemented in primary and secondary schools. This program must first be carefully and intentionally outlined in order to be successful. (This phrase transitions between my reasoning into my actual plan of action, introducing the specific steps of my program.) Drawing on my extensive experience as a university professor and teacher, I have found that certain styles of education are much more efficient than others. In order to leave a lasting impression on students, they should be supported through engaging

problem-solving based activities that teach them lessons they can apply outside of the classroom. (This phrase gives me credibility as a professor with experience with children and speaks directly to school officials that should want to better-equip their own students.) My proposed program follows the subsequent list of components:

~~A second piece~~ The first component of this program should be a lesson given by a professional (librarian, teacher, etc.) that will teach students how to find genuine and trustworthy information online through public journals, cross-checking across multiple sources, and identification of red flags. Oftentimes, people agree that there is lots of misinformation that is easily spread online; they simply do not know how to identify and avoid it. Providing kids with hands-on practice of fact checking will allow them to learn and develop critical skills that they can apply in other areas of their life. Through this, they will be able to be more objective in their future research and become less likely to act on their instinctive assumptions or beliefs when first seeing a headline or post online. (Moving this step of my program to the beginning of my plan of action makes the most sense chronologically. Students would perform better and the other parts of my program would be more effective if they first learned with lessons and guided practice).

~~One component~~ After establishing a baseline of knowledge and basic skills useful in navigating the internet, the second stage (This transitional phrase connects to the previous step of my program and chronologically introduces my next phase) of this program should be an activity that has students researching the same event or subject, but has each group gather their information from sources with drastically different biases. I have found that students often learn best through hands-on experiences with problem-solving. This activity will (These phrases give me credit as a professor and remind my reader why my program will be effective for a group of students) have students engage in their own independent research, creating a more accurate

simulation of media consumption. This will allow them to see how easy it is to fall victim to the bias of their sources in the real world. When students present their findings, they will be able to see a clear distinction in news delivery and word choice, showing how bias can easily influence the opinions of readers.

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An additional **Once students have developed and had time to practice their digital literacy skills, the final** (Ending with this step makes the most sense because after student have established their skills, they can put them to work in this independent research project that will educate themselves and their peers) part of this program should be an independent project-based activity that will improve students' global awareness. In this activity, students would be required to identify, research, and present on a global event or issue of their choosing that is not being reported in mainstream American media. Scholars and civilians across the country agree that American news tends to be much more polarizing and self-interested in comparison to mainstream outlets in other countries. **This often** which causes many people to be unaware of many issues and debates in the world around them. This activity would not only educate students

and their peers, but it would also encourage them to search for stories outside of the mainstream lens and develop a wider perspective, improving their awareness of events across the world.

By educating students on digital literacy, we can prepare the next generation to have the proper skills needed to form opinions based on accurate and trustworthy information. Highlighting the bias that is prevalent in popular media can help our society adjust to the digital age of information that fosters so much misinformation and propaganda. As the primary place of education, a school should teach their students the proper skills required to navigate independently in the real world. Implementing my described program will allow schools to help address the crisis of misinformation that is seen online today. The problem of false information shared online may seem daunting or overwhelming, but every person that becomes more digitally literate is one more step towards progress.

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Explanation of Changes

Explanation of changes

The first major change that I chose to make was **structural reorganization** mostly focused on my introduction and plan of action. I moved my definition of digital literacy to an earlier part of my introduction to clear up any confusion my reader may have and establish my argument from the beginning. I also changed the chronological order of my plan of action to make more sense logically. The second change I made was to emphasize my **credibility** as a professor in order to directly **connect to my audience** of school board officials. By doing this *throughout* my argument rather than only in my introduction(which is what I had originally done), I can continuously remind my readers why they should agree with my proposal. Next, I also **expanded on my ideas to create smoother transitions**, which is what I wrote my textbook chapter about. When reading my proposal, I felt that some of my paragraphs were disconnected and felt like they jumped around too much. To address this, I added certain phrases to logically connect my paragraphs and explain their relationships to each other. My final change was to **develop my counter arguments**. I added a new counter argument to my revision focused on parents' rights because I feel that this is a major counter argument to my proposal that I did not address at all originally.