



W. L. Adams Center for Writing

TRANSITIONS

Transitions are words, phrases or passages that link one sentence, paragraph, or main idea to the next. Good transitions often result from logical organization, but the writer may also need to use transitional cues. One way to cue readers about a transition between paragraphs is to use a key word, phrase, or idea from the previous paragraph as the springboard for the next paragraph's topic sentence, thus showing how the two paragraphs' main ideas fit together.

Sample paragraph: "The best writers, armed with past successes and layers of coping mechanisms, still harbor the fear of failure. Imagine the terror of students who can't build a complete sentence, much less an argument, and whose main motivation for writing is to avoid a failing grade."

The simplest cue uses the last word or phrase of the previous paragraph to launch into a new idea: "The **failing grade** students fear may become a reality if fear leads to writer's block...."

Another cue reaches further back into the paragraph for the key word: "Their **terror**, alone, may lead straight to writer's block and the 'F' the students dreaded so much. . . ."

Finally, the writer can compress the entire idea expressed in the previous paragraph into a single phrase, then launch into his or her new idea: "**Anxious writers** are certainly more prone than most to suffer from writer's block, which may only lead to the 'F' they dreaded so much..."

Another technique uses subordinating conjunctions, which set up two-part sentences, to bridge ideas. (These conjunctions include *after*, *although*, *as*, *because*, *before*, *despite*, *even though*, *except*, *if*, *since*, *unless*, *until*, *when*, *where*, *while*). In using this technique, do the following:

- start the paragraph with the proper conjunction.
- write the germ of the main idea from the previous paragraph.
- put in a comma.
- write the germ of the main idea for the next paragraph.

Example: "**Although** fear can inspire some writers to do their best work, it leads others to paralysis and failure."