



Center for Writing and Speaking

P NO. 6 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

Speech Transitions

Transitions are your way of letting your audience know that you are changing ideas. Here are some guidelines for creating great transitions:

- It is generally best to write clear and concise complete sentences for your transitions. Your presentation organization should be crystal clear to the audience.
- In writing, the transition sentence could be the last sentence of a paragraph, the first sentence of the next one, or both. Since you introduce new ideas in every paragraph, it is vital to write concise transitions that ease the reader through the shifts.
- Use transitions every time you change ideas. As a general rule, you should use transitions after your introduction, between each main point, and before your conclusion.

Here are some suggestions for transition styles:

- **Review-Preview:** What you just said, then what you are about to say.

Example: *Now that we've established a need for fundraising, let's see which fundraisers might be most effective. I will focus on two types of fundraisers: silent auctions and sales.*

Example: *In short, fundraising efforts are needed because of budget reductions. Next, we'll look at our fundraising options.*

- **Rhetorical Questions:** A leading question that doesn't invite an actual response followed by the answer that you want.

Example: *Can a system designed to exploit the vulnerable really be called society? Not according to Rousseau.*

Example: *But couldn't other theories explain this discrepancy? They can certainly try, but only Zen Buddhism offers a full explanation.*

- **Signposting:** By including certain words in your transitions, you can alert your audience that you are about to switch ideas. Start with a signpost word and then complete the sentence for a transition. Signpost words are: next, first, last, we now turn, in the other hand, finally, now let's consider, if you think that's shocking, similarly, and yet, altogether, at present, etc.

Example: *Keeping these points in mind about Japanese internment camps, let's look at their historical context.*

(continued on reverse)

AGNES SCOTT



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Transitions, Continued

Example: *Now that we understand differential equations, consider this problem.*

- **Themed transitions:** Be creative! Some speakers choose to carry out a theme throughout the speech.

Example: *Let's begin our journey by looking at the panhandle of Texas...The next stop on our journey is East Texas, known for its lush forests...Next we will drive down to South Texas to explore the Valley...etc.*

- **Story or example:** Another option is to carry a story or example throughout the speech. Let's say you tell a shocking story about a college student named Sara contracting bacterial meningitis in the introduction. The transitions might look something like this:

Examples: *Like Sara, you are at risk for contracting bacterial meningitis... Let's talk more specifically about how you can contract the disease... Unlike Sara, you have the ability to prevent bacterial meningitis... So, I encourage you to keep Sara's story in mind as you make decisions over the next few weeks.*

AGNES SCOTT