

Transitional Topics / Transitional Clinchers

by Pamela White

Problem: Paragraphs will sound choppy if you don't use some kind of transition to connect one to the next.

Solution:

- Transitional words and expressions
 - Potential problem: sometimes overused or inelegant
- Transitional Clincher, Transitional Topic, or transitional sentence
 - Potential problem: hard to do effectively

The transitional clincher and topic are simply topic sentences or clincher sentences that relate not only to their own paragraph but also to the one before (transitional topic) or after (transitional clincher).

This doesn't preempt the usual rule: Topic sentences and clincher sentences must still repeat or reflect two to three key words; those key words, which you must bold, must still reflect the main idea of the paragraph.

Now, however, add to your topic sentence a reference back to the preceding paragraph (transitional topic) OR add to your clincher a hint of the main idea of the next paragraph (transitional clincher).

Variations on this theme, such as a transitional sentence, can bridge introductions and conclusions as well.

Examples

Transitions (bolded and underlined), from paper on Shakespeare (8th grader):

One body paragraph ends: Who could have guessed that from such humble upbringings would rise a phenomenon for all the ages.

Next paragraph begins: **Similarly**, Shakespeare went without an outstanding education.

And ends: Despite his grammar school teachings, it appears that William Shakespeare did not take his education as far as possible.

Next paragraph begins: His marriage and family are the **last** known parts of his early life.

And ends: After the birth of the twins, Shakespeare disappeared from history for a while, going into the time "popularly known as his lost years" (Bryson 44).

Transitional opening sentence (not a topic sentence because it's a concluding paragraph):

Next paragraph (Sub-essay conclusion) begins: **While little indeed is known about Shakespeare's early life, it is essential** to understanding him.

Examples continued

Transitional topic, following a paragraph about the popularity of Shakespeare's acting troupe, the King's Men (10th grader):

Despite all the **fame and popularity Shakespeare and the King's Men** earned for themselves, Shakespeare's final days [the new topic] were not nearly so triumphant.

Transitional clincher, from paper comparing the account of creation in Genesis to the story of creation in Greek mythology (7th grader):

One body paragraph ends: The **differences between** the two **creations** reflect the differences between their **creators** as well.

Next paragraph begins: Though both stories contain a familiar theme, the **creators** in each account are unmistakably **different**.

Transitional topic, from paper on Shakespeare (9th grader):

One body paragraph (about how crowded London was during Shakespeare's day) ends: Thus the ever-growing population of London swarmed the streets of the city.

Next paragraph begins: Along with the crowded and noisy environment of London, followed an unsanitary and foul atmosphere. (New topic: London was also unsanitary.)

That paragraph ends: Poor sanitation and a sickening pervasive stench shrouded the life of everyday occupants in London.

Next paragraph begins: In Shakespeare's London crime flourished.

How could this capable writer have bridged those two paragraphs better? One solution is a transitional topic:

Garbage was not the only kind of filth in Shakespeare's London: crime also flourished.

Sub-essay I conclusion ends with: Because of the popularity of Shakespeare and other authors, the city thronged with refugees, tourists, and citizens who sought entertainment. Author Miriam Greenblatt put it this way: "Yet despite the filth and the crime, London was a lively, bustling place" (42).

Next paragraph (Sub-essay II introduction) begins: As the main seaport of England and Europe, London appealed to many merchants, who shipped their products across the sea to trade with colonists in America. (3 topics are trade, culture, and politics)

How could this capable writer have bridged those two paragraphs better? One solution is a transitional sentence:

London earned its lively reputation in part due to its location. As the main seaport of England and Europe....