

You should consider joining two ideas or sentences with a conjunction or transition when the connection might not otherwise be clear to your reader. Effective use of conjunctions and transitions helps your reader understand your logic and reasoning easily, and allows for smooth shifts from one idea to the next.

Coordinating Conjunctions join two clauses and show how they are related. They join pairs of clauses that are equal and grammatically independent. “And,” “but,” and “so” are the most commonly used.

Coordinating Conjunctions		
and	or	yet (meaning “and still”)
but	nor	for (meaning “because”)
so		

Joining two independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction results in a comma splice error or run-on sentence:

The study was successful, additional funding was awarded to the researchers. (comma splice)

It is acceptable to begin a sentence with a coordinating conjunction in many types of writing, including fiction and informal publications, but this is generally discouraged in academic writing.

Subordinating Conjunctions introduce subordinate or dependent clauses.

Subordinating Conjunctions					
after	even if	provided that	than	when	whether
although	even though	rather than	that	whenever	while
as	if	since	though	where	why
because	in order that	so that	unless	whereas	
before	once		until	wherever	

Subordinate clauses can go either first or last in a sentence. The most important information usually comes last. Be careful to attach them correctly to an independent clause, and to avoid creating a sentence fragment.

Complete (simple) sentence: Hamlet devotes himself to avenging his father’s death.

Sentence fragment: While Hamlet devotes himself to avenging his father’s death.

A common mistake is to put a comma after a subordinating conjunction instead of at the end of the dependent clause it introduces:

Incorrect: Although, deforestation has detrimental effects on the environment, illegal logging continues to be a problem.

Correct: Although deforestation has detrimental effects on the environment, illegal logging continues to be a problem.



Conjunctive Adverbs join words, phrases, or clauses.

Conjunctive Adverbs				
accordingly	finally	instead	next	subsequently
also	furthermore	likewise	nonetheless	then
besides	hence	meanwhile	otherwise	therefore
consequently	however	moreover	similarly	thus
conversely	indeed	nevertheless	still	

They can usually be used in a sentence in three different ways:

1. at the beginning of a sentence

The experiment was inconclusive. Therefore, further testing is recommended.

2. after a semicolon

The experiment was inconclusive; therefore, further testing is recommended.

3. between two commas

The experiment was inconclusive. Further testing, however, will be done at a later date.

If the break is weak, no punctuation is required: Further testing is therefore recommended.

Other Common Transitional Phrases in Academic Writing

Adding information	additionally; in addition
Giving an example	for example; such as; for instance; to illustrate; in other words
Stating a contrast	in contrast; on the contrary; in spite of
Acknowledging opposition	while this may be true; while it may be true that; of course
Stating a consequence or result	so that; with the result that; for this reason; due to
Indicating relationships in sequence or time	next; first; second; at the same time; thus far; after; during; following; at this time
Concluding	in conclusion; as a result; overall; in the end

You may have noticed that several of these words can have multiple meanings. In order to avoid confusion, use the most specific term possible! For example,

The buses stopped running as it was snowing.

Does “as” here mean “*because* it was snowing” or “*at the same time* it snowed”? “As” can function as a conjunction, but also as a preposition and an adverb. “Because” or “since” might be clearer here.