

FLOW AND TRANSITIONS

Flow determines how writing moves from sentence to sentence. Sentences should relay unified messages and transition smoothly from one to the next.

There are three main transition styles: chronological, coordinate, and logical.

Transitions determine the way that writing progresses from one section to the next.

These principles come from Chapter 5 and 8 of *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup.

CREATING FLOW AND TRANSITIONING BETWEEN SECTIONS

Flow

1. **Select topics** – These words act as your subjects, key terms, and minor terms. They should relate to each other in some way.
2. **Make main topics the subjects of your sentences** – This helps readers focus on important topics.
3. **Place main topics near the start of your sentences** – This draws readers to important material.
4. **Begin sentences with common, recognizable information** – This helps readers adjust to new concepts.
5. **Close sentences with new, unknown information** – The ending of one sentence should pave a path for the beginning of the next.
6. **Place basic information before complicated information** – Readers must understand basic concepts before they can learn complicated concepts.

Transitions

7. **Determine a transition style** – Choose the chronological style if your sections tell a story. Use the coordinate style if all your sections build towards one theme. Implement the logical style if sections progress conceptually.
 - a. **Tell your story through chronological transitions** – Begin sections with words like “first,” “next,” and “finally.”
 - b. **Build your theme through coordinate transitions** – Begin sections with words like “first,” “second,” “also,” “more important,” and “in addition.”
 - c. **Explain concepts through logical transitions** – Begin sections with words like “for example,” “on the other hand,” and “it follows that.”

EXAMPLES

Flow

People communicate through many different **methods**. These **methods** include **in-person, phone, and video conversations**.

- **Select topics: people and methods**
- **Make topics the subjects of your sentences:** “People” and “methods” perform the actions in these sentences, making them subjects.
- **Place topics near the start of your sentences:** The words “people” and “methods” occur within the first several words of each sentence.
- **Begin sentences with common, recognizable information, and close sentences with new, unknown information:** The first sentence begins with the common word “people” and closes with the new word “methods.” Similarly, the second sentence begins with the recognizable word “methods” and ends with the new concepts “in-person, phone, and video conversations.”
- **Place basic information before complicated information:** The second sentence starts with the basic information “methods” before introducing the specific methods “in-person, phone, and video conversations.”

Transitions

Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes because of their density, texture, and flavor.

- **Determine a transition style:** The points “density,” “texture,” and “flavor” all build towards the theme that consumers prefer waffles to pancakes.
- **Build your theme through coordinate transitions:**
 - **In addition**, waffle flavor escapes the mealy tang of pancake batter and pairs better with the sweetness of syrup.

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