When students visit the CGCC Writing Center, they often ask their tutor to check how their paper is flowing. “Does it sound okay?” they might ask. “Does everything make sense?” How well a paper “flows” depends on the paper’s organization. We focused on organization in our February 2005 issue – check out the article, “Organization: Not just for closets!” for ideas and strategies related to structuring your paper effectively.

But even if your paper is organized very well, it still might not sound right. Why is that? Because it isn’t enough to put your ideas in a logical, easy-to-follow order. You also need to show how ideas and arguments are related to each other. For that, we use transitions.

What are transitions? In all writing, be it academic, professional or personal, your goal is to share information clearly and concisely. Often, you will be trying to convince your reader to accept your point-of-view. Transitions help you accomplish this goal by telling readers what to do with the information you are giving them.

A transition might be a single word, a quick phrase, a sentence or even an entire paragraph. They are signs for your readers, telling them how to think about, organize and react to old and new ideas in your work.

Why do I need to use transitions? The most obvious reason is to improve the readability of your paper. Transitions help your reader flow from one idea to the next. They also let a reader know when you are changing direction.

Where do transitions go in the paper? It depends on the type of the transition. Generally speaking, there are three types of transitions: between sentences (within a paragraph), between paragraphs and between sections.

When transitioning between sentences, you usually just need a word or short phrase. These transitions act as cues, helping readers anticipate what is coming before they read it. Most often, they are found at the beginning of the transition sentence.

When transitioning between paragraphs, you might use a word or two, a phrase, or a complete sentence. These types of transitions usually appear at the beginning of a paragraph and function as a bridge between the ideas you just discussed and the new ideas you’re about to introduce.

Sometimes it’s necessary to include a transitional paragraph between sections of your paper. Let’s say you are writing a persuasive paper about global warming. Before you can build your argument, you need to make sure your audience understands the issue and any technical terms or concepts related to the topic. To accomplish that, you might add a transition paragraph after your introduction that accomplishes these goals. This paragraph would be neutral (ie, you’re not actively arguing your thesis yet). You are just giving the reader information and facts they need to understand the issue.

Do you have an example? Sure! We found this example on the ASU Writing Center online transitions handout. We’ve underlined the writer’s transition between paragraphs:

…Teresa eventually left Mexico for the United States to pursue her education in law, so that she might return to Mexico one day to help her fellow citizens. One can see Teresa’s decision to move to America as a quest for both personal fulfillment and equality for her people.

As noble as Teresa’s reason was for relocating to the U.S., Antonio’s decision to move his entire family because he feared for their safety is even more compelling.

Here’s another example, this time of a transition between sentences.

The intent of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill is to counter the growing influence of money in American politics. However, ...
there are many concerns that the reforms will undermine First Amendment rights to free speech.

The transition word “however” alerts you to a shift in perspective. Since the second sentence contradicts the ideas contained in the first sentence, we need to alert the reader to the change in direction. If the second sentence was adding more information to the first, we might use a transitional word or phrase like “in addition” or “also” or “furthermore.”

Anything else I should know?

There are several types of transitional devices, depending on how you want to direct your reader’s attention. Some lead your reader forward as you “build” on an idea or concept. Others make your reader compare ideas or draw conclusions from preceding thoughts.

To make things even easier for you, we’ve assembled a list of commonly used transition-al devices. Just stop by the Writing Center and ask for our Transitions handout – it’s absolutely FREE!

You can also visit with a tutor whenever you like – no appointment needed!

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Finals Week Schedule**
(May 8 – 12, 2006)

Monday – Wednesday
8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Thursday
8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

**First and Second Summer Sessions**
(May 30 – August 3, 2006)

Monday – Thursday,
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
(closed Fridays)

**Evening Summer Session**
(May 30 – July 20, 2006)

Monday – Thursday
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

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**TRANSITIONS** from Page 1

Sources:
Purdue University Online Writing Lab. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl_transition.html>

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/transitions.html>

Arizona State University Writing Center. <www.asu.edu/duas/wcenter/transitions.html>

Some Useful Transition Markers:

To repeat/rephrase an idea:
In other words
That is
Again
To be exact
More precisely

To illustrate an idea:
For example
In this manner
In particular

To announce a contrast:
Yet
However
On the other hand
Instead of
Conversely
In spite of this

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Dear Grammar Goddess ~

Sometimes when I am including a quote in my paper, I need to omit or add words so the quote will make sense within the paragraph. How can I make it clear to my reader when I have altered an original quote?

- Quoting in Queen Creek

Dear Quoting:

If you’ve been dying for an opportunity to use your bracket keys – they look like this: [ ] – now is the time!

Whenever you add a word or words in a quotation, you should put brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text. For example:

*Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states: "some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale" (78).*

Likewise, if you omit a word or words from a quotation, you should indicate the deleted word or word by using ellipsis marks surrounded by brackets. For example:

*In an essay on urban legends, Jan Harold Brunvand notes that "some individuals make a point of learning every recent rumor or tale [...] and in a short time a lively exchange of details occurs" (78).*

Please note that if the original work includes ellipsis marks, there is no need for brackets. You only need to use brackets around ellipsis marks if you want to show that you omitted some words found in the original quote.

Source: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r MLA.html
Avoiding Plagiarism

At this time of the semester, final exams, projects, and papers can add up to a lot of stress!

Sometimes in the midst of all these deadlines, it’s easy to unintentionally commit plagiarism. To help you avoid that mistake, we put together a FAQ about academic plagiarism.

What is plagiarism?
Plagiarism occurs any time you claim another’s words as your own. Some examples include:

- Quoting or paraphrasing someone else’s words without crediting them as the source
- Buying a term paper from the Internet and submitting it as your own
- Allowing a friend or relative to write part or all of your paper
- Copying and pasting information from the Internet into your paper without crediting the source

What happens if I plagiarize?
We don’t want to sound too scary, but there are academic penalties for plagiarism. According to the Chandler-Gilbert Student Handbook, the penalties for plagiarism may include:

- A written warning
- Lowering your course grade
- Additional academic assignments
- Course failure
- College suspension
- College expulsion

Fortunately, it’s very easy to avoid plagiarism! Here are some ideas to keep you on track. If you’re ever in doubt, just stop by the Writing Center. Our tutors would be happy to look over your paper and help you credit your sources correctly.

The Writing Center’s Top 5 Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. **Work with the Writing Center** – our tutors can help you integrate and cite your research.

2. **Include your instructor**. They want you to be successful! So don’t be shy about asking questions and clarifying instructions. Just don’t expect your instructor to do the citations for you.

3. **Take notes as you research** – read actively, summarizing main points and noting ideas and questions along the way.

4. **Keep track of your sources as you use them**. If you cut and paste a passage from a source into your draft, be sure to highlight or bold the text so you’ll know those are someone else’s words. Later, you can decide if you’ll quote, paraphrase or summarize these ideas.

5. **Create a research portfolio**. Store your sources, notes, working bibliography and annotations. When you are ready to work on your Works Cited or References page, you will be ready!

Source: “Plagiarism Policies” handout. CGCC Writing Center.

The Archives

For more great information and handy writing tips, check out earlier editions of *Writing Right @ CGCC*, available at: www.cgc.edu/learning/center/newsletter.shtml

**Writing a Critical Analysis: How pizza can help**
(Feb 2006)

**Say What? Decoding your instructor’s assignment sheet**
(Sept/Oct 2005)

**Taking the Mystery Out of Citing Sources**
(Apr/May 2005)

**Organization… not just for closets!**
(Feb 2005)

**Getting Started**
(Oct 2004)

**Concluding Thoughts**
(May 2004)

**You Never Get a Second Chance to Make a First Impression**
(Apr 2004)

**Why Can’t We All Just Get Along?**
The Art of Argumentation
(Feb/March 2004)

**Inaugural Issue**
(Dec 2003)

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Detail makes the difference between boring and terrific writing. It’s the difference between a pencil sketch and a lush oil painting. As a writer, words are your paint. Use all the colors.
- Rhys Alexander, *Writing Gooder*, 12-09-05
5 Tips for Writing Effective Complaint Letters

Have you ever had a horrible experience with a business or organization? Nearly everyone has. The good news is that a well-written complaint letter can be surprisingly effective in getting the results you want. However, there is a right – and wrong – way to complain. Use these simple techniques to write complaint letters that get noticed.

1) Be concise. Everyone is overwhelmed with information these days. If you don’t want your letter to wind up in the trash, make your main point in five seconds or less.

2) Be authoritative. Use all the skills you’ve learned in English courses – clarity, organization, good grammar and punctuation – to establish yourself as an intelligent consumer who deserves to be taken seriously.

3) Be factual. Provide all relevant facts, dates, names, and details clearly. Using facts and information (not emotion), justify why your complaint should be resolved. Resist the urge to rant and rave. You will alienate your audience and lose credibility.

4) Be constructive. Accentuate the positive whenever possible. State the facts and then suggest what needs to be done. Saying you’ll never use that company again doesn’t provide much incentive for them to make you happy.

5) Be friendly. Threatening people generally doesn’t produce good results. Instead, think about what kind of complaint letter you would respond to if the tables were turned. If you are kind to people, they are more likely to be kind to you.

Source: http://www.businessballs.com/complaint-letters.htm

Dear Friends ~

It is indeed bittersweet to announce my departure from the Writing Center this spring. Working in the Writing Center has been nothing short of amazing. Students, your hard work and enthusiasm inspire me every single day. And our faculty’s commitment to student success is the best I’ve ever seen.

I can’t leave without saying thank you to the wonderful tutors in the Writing Center. You are all so talented - I will miss you! Thanks also to Eva Falletta, Learning Center Director, and Veronica Pantoja, Faculty Liaison. Together, we made a great Writing Center even better with a new newsletter, student writing workshops, an orientation video, and much, much more.

CGCC, you will always hold a very special place in my heart.

Shannon Dougherty
Writing Center Associate

Read, every day, something no one else is reading. Think, every day, something no one else is thinking. Do, every day, something no one else would be silly enough to do. It is bad for the mind to continually be part of unanimity. - Christopher Morley

Did You Know?

National Test Reveals Overall Literacy Rates for College Grads Falling

Yikes! According to a recent New York Times article, the average American college graduate’s literacy declined significantly over the past decade.

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy, given in 2003, is our nation’s most important test of how well adult Americans can read.

When the test was last administered in 1992, 40 percent of the nation’s college graduates were able to read lengthy, complex English texts and draw complicated inferences. But on the 2003 test, only 31 percent of college grads could perform those same high-level skills.

Why the dramatic decline in literacy? Grover J. Whitehurst, director of an institute within the Department of Education that helped to oversee the test, blames the trend on more time spent watching television and surfing the Internet.

“We’re seeing substantial declines in reading for pleasure,” Whitehurst said. “It’s showing up in our levels.”

The test was administered to 19,000 people aged 16 and older, in homes, college housing and in prisons. The study also found steep declines in the English literacy of Hispanics in the United States, and significant increases among blacks and Asians.

Summer is just around the corner. What a perfect time to brush up on your recreational reading! Why not stop by the CGCC Library today and ask for a recommendation. Your brain will thank you!