



Lesson 2.3

Staying Connected

If links in a chain aren't connected, they don't really form a chain. They're just a bunch of metal loops—no longer useful for towing a car, holding back a crowd, or keeping a wandering dog in its yard. The ideas in sentences and paragraphs also need to be clearly linked—connected, that is. Break the chain, and you force the reader to make his or her own connections—which may or may not be the ones you had in mind! In writing, connections are also called *transitions*. Writers use transitions to show readers how one idea or sentence relates to another, or how everything connects to a larger main idea. Strong transitions help sentences, paragraphs, and even chapters work together to create one smooth, coherent message.

Sharing an Example: *Leaving Home*

“Sooner or later, we all leave home.” That’s the lead (and part of the main message) in the book *Leaving Home* by Sneed B. Collard III. In the following two paragraphs, Mr. Collard describes how whales and Gila monsters leave the “comforts” of home. Follow these steps:

- Listen as your teacher or someone in your writing circle reads the passage aloud.
- Don't follow along with your *eyes*. Just hear the transitions in your mind.
- Read the passage on your own, silently. See if the transitions you heard are the ones we marked in **blue bold**.



Each winter, mother gray whales give birth to their calves in warm lagoons along the Pacific coast of Mexico. The calves nurse for several weeks. In spring, they accompany their mothers on a 7,000-mile journey to northern coastal feeding grounds. No one is sure how, but the whales know exactly where they are going and often show up at the same feeding grounds year after year. In the fall, the young whales find their way back to Mexico completely on their own.



Unlike whales, Gila monsters and most other animals are born without knowing exactly where they should go. But most animal babies do have instincts to guide them. Once they hatch or are born, their instincts may tell them to follow certain smells, seek out water, or find holes to live in. Many young animals make mistakes and die or are eaten, but the fortunate ones find the food, water, and shelter they need to survive.

Leaving Home
by Sneed B. Collard III

Words That Connect

On the next page is a list of transitions, transitional phrases, and linking words. They are grouped by purpose. Look over the list. Then consider adding it to your writing notebook. (As you run across other transitions in your reading, add them to the list.)



Transition Words

To show **location**

above	behind	by	near	outside
across	below	down	nearby	over
against	beneath	in back of	next to	throughout
along	beside	in front of	off	to the right
among	between	inside	onto	under
around	beyond	into	on top of	

To show **time**

about	continually	just then	now	today
after	during	lately	second	tomorrow
afterward	each time	later	soon	until
at	finally	meanwhile	suddenly	whenever
before	first	moments later	then	while
constantly	for a while	next	third	yesterday

To set up a **comparison**

also	as well	in the same way	likewise
as	equally	like	similarly

To set up a **contrast**

all the same	even so	nevertheless	otherwise	while
although	from another	nonetheless	still	yet
but	perspective	on the other	to see it	
	however	hand	another way	

To create **emphasis**

especially	in fact	to be sure	truly
for this reason	most important	to emphasize	

To **conclude** or **summarize**

after all	at length	finally	therefore
all in all	because	in conclusion	to sum up
as a result	conclusively	in the end	ultimately

To **add information** or **set up an example**

additionally	and	besides	furthermore	next
again	anyway	finally	in addition	other
along with	another	for example	in other words	what's more
also	as well as	for instance	moreover	



Hunting for Connections

Read the following passage and underline any transitions you find. Refer to the list of transition words to help you—but remember that not all transitions appear on that list.

As soon as I adopted Jake from the shelter, I knew I had to train him to do two things: curb the drooling and sit. Jake was a droopy-mouth kind of dog, however, so my first goal was hopeless. I decided to focus on the second.

Before we started sitting lessons, I had to hit the Web to figure out what to do. A food reward seemed like a safe bet, as well as plenty of time and patience.

The next day, I armed myself with doggie treats and took Jake out to our neighborhood park for his first lesson. It was a beautiful day for some dog training. I removed his leash, wiped the drool from my hand, and then pushed down on his rear end.

“Sit,” I commanded. “Sit, boy.”

Suddenly, Jake spotted a squirrel. He let out a hearty bark and took off running, with me crying out behind him.

An hour later, I was a sweating, exhausted mess. Jake had happily chased three squirrels, a Frisbee, and a flock of birds, but we were no closer to him actually sitting. In the end, I decided to skip the part where the treats were a reward and instead used them as a lure. In other words, I had to bribe my dog to sit.

Hey, don’t laugh. It worked.

Share and Compare

Meet with a partner or in a writing circle to share the transitions you found in the passage about training a dog. Did you hear the same connections? Underline any transitions you might have missed. Then fill in your response.



The passage contains

- many, many transitions. Things are so well connected that it just flows.
- a few transitions, but it could use a lot more.
- almost NO transitions. I could barely make sense of it.

Making a Chain of Thought

Writing can have three kinds of transitional problems:

- **Transition overload**, in which the writer uses transitions even when they aren't needed
- **Missing transitions**, in which the writer forgets to connect ideas
- **Misuse**, in which the writer uses the *wrong* transition, leaving the reader confused

Read the following passage carefully, pencil in hand. Feel free to insert, delete, or replace transitions to create a smooth, logical chain of thought. **HINT:** Feel free to reword sentences as needed.

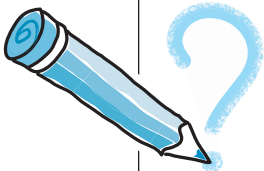
I'm not sure how it happened, so therefore, my room is a disaster! On the other hand, there are clothes, books, and games everywhere—including on the floor. At last, clean and dirty clothes are piled on chairs and across my bed. However, the space that is supposed to be my desk is too cluttered to work on. For one thing, my mom is wondering where the carpet went because she can't see any trace of it. My dad says to forget about the carpet. He worries where the awful smell is coming from. On the other hand, that smell has gotten so bad that I won't even have any



friends come over. For example, I'm going to clean *my* room before I lose all contact with *my* friends, lose all *my* valuable stuff, or am grounded by *my* parents. Nevertheless, I could be cited for a fire hazard, and then, at long last, I will have *more* trouble!

Share and Compare

Meet with a partner or in a writing circle to share your revisions of the paper about the cluttered room. Talk about the kinds of revisions you did. Were you primarily taking transitions *out*—or putting new ones *in*? Is the chain of thought clear?



A Writer's Question

Choose any recent piece of writing from your writing folder. Read it carefully and lightly circle any transitional words or phrases you see. What did you find?

- I used *many* good transitions. I'm a transition champ!
- I didn't use too many transitions, but the chain of thought is clear anyway.
- I didn't use enough transitions. But now I know how to add them.



Putting It to the Test

Are certain kinds of transitions connected to certain genres of writing? Look back at the list of transition words. Are there particular transitional words or phrases that would be especially useful in a narrative piece? Informational essay? Persuasive essay? Why?