

Lesson 5.3

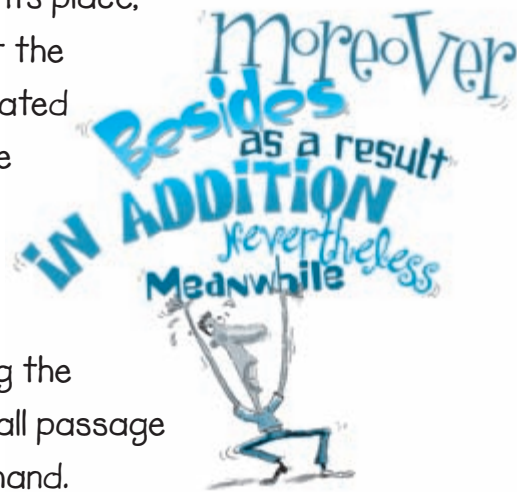
Avoiding Transition Overload!

All of us overeat occasionally. Remember that time you ate seven slices of pizza instead of the usual three? (Or maybe that was one of us as we were writing and editing this unit late one night!) Anyway, anything can be overdone, not just pizza. Take transitions, which are words or phrases like *next*, *therefore*, *in addition*, *moreover*, and *in other words*. Used well, transitions keep your ideas clear and connected. But too much of a good thing, like that seventh slice of pizza, can make a reader feel on overload.

Sharing an Example: The Monkey's Paw

Following is a slightly revised passage from "The Monkey's Paw" by W.W. Jacobs. With apologies to Mr. Jacobs, we have piled on a few extra transitional words and phrases. See if you can identify the transitions we added—the ones the author never put in. Then go ahead and cross them out.

First of all, the talisman was in its place, and, moreover, a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his mutilated son before him ere he could escape from the room seized upon him. In addition, his brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and as a result groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the unwholesome thing in his hand.



After that, even his wife's face seemed changed as he entered the room. But all the same, it was white and expectant, and in fact his fears seemed to have an unnatural look upon it. In conclusion, he was afraid of her.

"Wish!" she cried, in a strong voice.

"It is foolish and wicked," he faltered.

"Wish!" repeated his wife.

He raised his hand. "I wish my son alive again."

Your Response

How did this passage sound and feel to you? Was it on transition overload—or did you find very few words to cross out?

- ☐ This passage was as smooth as a boat gliding through water. I didn't cross out one word.
- ☐ I crossed out a *few* words, but most of the transitions were needed.
- ☐ I crossed out one word after another. Transition overload was weighing the writing down like rocks!

Listen and Reflect

Listen to your teacher read the original version of "The Monkey's Paw" aloud as you follow along. Silently reread the text of our revised version as you listen. Then discuss the difference between the two versions. Which transitions are in the original? Which one—with or without transitions added—is more fluent to your ear? Why?

Overloaded—Or Not?

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Read the following piece aloud with a pen or pencil in hand. Ask yourself, *Which transitions are helpful in creating fluency and meaning, and which ones get in the way?* Cross out any transitional words or phrases you think are unneeded or more confusing than helpful.

First of all, I don't remember the exact time of the accident, but I do, however, in fact, remember the collision of the two shuttle vans. To repeat, although I didn't look at my watch for instance, I did nevertheless see the moment of impact between the two vehicles. Before we could shuttle to town, however, first we had to pick up our checked luggage and, second, immediately call the hotel, moreover, to send the courtesy van over. Meanwhile, the courtesy van was late on top of everything else. As a result, we were all on the lookout for it. Finally, it arrived. As soon as the driver began to open his door, however, another shuttle vehicle pulled along side and nevertheless slammed into the hotel van's door of all things. In conclusion, on the other hand, it was a pretty nerve-racking way to begin our trip.

Share and Compare

Meet with a partner to share your work. Take turns reading your revisions aloud—and discuss the changes you made. Was this piece on transition overload? Did your revision make the meaning clearer—and help readers focus on the message?

Transitions in Moderation

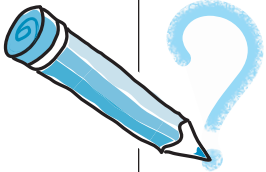
Whereas seven slices of pizza might be too many for most of us, half a slice might not be enough. Most things—including pizza and transitions—work best in moderation. How moderate are *you* in using transitions?

We have chosen some writing topics that we think will lead you naturally into the use of transitional words. However, feel free to choose your own topic if you prefer. Take about 5 minutes to plan and another 15 to write, using transitions in moderation. Suggested topics:

- Compare two kinds of pets
- Compare elementary and middle school experiences
- Explain step by step how to make pizza—or do any simple task
- Create a persuasive argument for or against cell phone use in cars
- Create a quick summary of the highlights (good and bad) of the last year . . . OR
- Create a topic of your choice: _____

Share and Compare

Meet with a partner or in a writing circle to share your drafts. Look and listen for transitional words and expressions in your own writing—and that of your classmates. Did you all achieve a good balance? Was anyone on transition overload? Did any of you *omit* transitions that would have been helpful? Take this opportunity to make some light revisions.



A Writer's Questions

Achieving balance—in anything—can be tricky. As a writer, how do you know when you've achieved the right balance with your transitions—enough to connect ideas clearly but not so many that you will overwhelm your readers?



Putting It to the Test

Could there be a reason that transitions are particularly important in on-demand writing? What do transitional words and phrases tell you, as a reader, about the writer's train of thought? Why is that so important in a testing situation?