

# Transitions (ESL)

## WHAT THIS HANDOUT IS ABOUT

Logical connectors are often listed in categories like “contrast” with no further explanation; however, there are important, though subtle differences in how they signal relationships between ideas. This handout will help you choose the appropriate connector by explaining how some of the more common expressions function to connect ideas.

## TRANSITIONS THAT SHOW CONTRAST

Expression	Function	Example
<i>In contrast</i>	Shows contrast between two comparable things	<i>Northern regions experienced record snowfall last year. <b>In contrast</b>, southern regions had one of the mildest winters on record.</i>
	Synonymous with “but”	<b>NOT:</b> <i>I’ve had breakfast; <b>in contrast</b>, I’m still hungry.</i>
	NOT synonymous with “despite this”	
<i>However</i>	Shows contrast between comparable things or between expectation and reality	<i>Northern regions experienced record snowfall last year. <b>However</b>, southern regions had one of the mildest winters on record. (contrasting two similar things)</i> <i>The research clearly shows the risks. <b>However</b>, incidence of smoking is increasing rapidly in developing countries. (contrasting expectation and reality)</i>
	Synonymous with “but” and “despite this”	<i>I’ve had breakfast; <b>however</b>, I’m still hungry.</i>

<i>On the contrary</i>	Opposition (not x but y).  Follows a negative statement and elaborates	<i>The island was nothing like the tropical paradise we had expected. <b>On the contrary</b>, it was noisy, dirty, and completely unrelaxing!</i>  <i>(In academic writing, the phrase "contrary to" is far more common: <b>Contrary to</b> the tropical paradise we had expected, the island was noisy, dirty, and completely unrelaxing.)</i>
------------------------	--	---

<i>On the other hand</i>	Comparison of two choices or two sides of an issue	<i>Buying lottery tickets is probably a waste of money. <b>On the other hand</b>, it might be the best investment you could ever make!</i>
--------------------------	--	--

<i>Nevertheless, Nonetheless</i>	Shows contrast between expectation and reality  Synonymous with "but" and "despite this"	<i>The research clearly shows the risks. <b>Nevertheless</b>, incidence of smoking is increasing rapidly in developing countries.</i>  <i>I've had breakfast; <b>nevertheless</b>, I'm still hungry.</i>
----------------------------------	--	--

### A COMPARISON OF TRANSITIONS THAT INDICATE CONTRAST

Shows contrast between two comparable things	Shows contrast between expectation and reality	Compares two choices or sides of an issue	Shows opposition (not X but Y). Follows negative statement.	Shows opposition. Does not follow a negative statement.	Synonymous with "but"	Synonymous with "despite this"
--	--	---	---	---	-----------------------	--------------------------------

---

*Contrary  
to*

✓

*In  
contrast*

✓

✓

*However*

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

*Neverth  
eless*

✓

✓

✓

*Nonethel  
ess*

✓

✓

✓

*On the  
contrary*

✓

*On the  
other  
hand*

✓

✓

### **TRANSITIONS THAT SHOW ADDITION**

**Expression**

**Function**

**Example**

---

*Also* Almost interchangeable with “and.” Prefers identical subjects and usually appears after the subject.

*The community is working to meet the needs of its citizens. The Town Council has just authorized a new senior center for the elderly. It has **also** implemented new social programs for teens and will be discussing a preschool program at the next meeting.*

*Furthermore* Usually used when three or more reasons (or premises) are given for the same conclusion

*Moderate exercise has many beneficial effects. It lowers blood pressure, reduces weight, and improves overall muscle tone. **Furthermore**, it has the added benefit of releasing endorphins, generally improving the mood of those who exercise.*

*In addition, Additionally* More formal than “and.” Used for joining sentences. Prefers non-identical subjects and appears before the subject.

*The community is working to meet the needs of its citizens. The Town Council has just authorized a new senior center for the elderly. **In addition**, the Parks Department has instituted a summer arts program for teens.*

*In addition to* Use when adding a noun phrase to a sentence. Verbs in this phrase take the *-ing* form.

***In addition to** building a new senior center for the elderly, the community has implemented a free senior transportation system.*

***In addition to** the new senior center, there is a new transportation system.*

*Moreover* Usually used when two or more reasons (or premises) are given for

*The Senator’s remarks have outraged the liberals; **moreover**, they have alienated the conservatives. He*

---

the same conclusion *will surely suffer in the next election.*

## TRANSITIONS THAT SHOW CAUSE-EFFECT

Expression	Function	Example
<i>Consequently</i>	Signals causal relationship	<i>He was absent over 50% of the time and missed the final exam. <b>Consequently</b>, he failed the course.</i>
<i>Therefore</i>	Signals causal relationship. Also signals a logical conclusion or reasonable inference.	<i>He was absent over 50% of the time and missed the final exam. <b>Therefore</b>, he failed the course.</i> <i>He has failed several courses this year. <b>Therefore</b>, I think it's likely that he'll change his major.</i>
<i>For this/that reason</i>	Signals causal relationship when reason is explicitly stated.	<i>She was an excellent intern last summer. <b>For this reason</b>, I'm willing to hire her for the new full-time position.</i>
<i>Hence, Thus</i>	Same as "therefore" but more formal. Both of these can be used to introduce phrases rather than complete sentences.	<i>The grant is nearing the end of its cycle. <b>Thus</b> we're actively seeking funding.</i> <i>The grant is nearing the end of its cycle. <b>Hence</b>, the search for new funding.</i>

---

*In that case*

Signals a conditional relationship, like if->then

*Water may reach flood stage by morning. **In that case** (if that happens), the National Guard will come to assist.*

**This handout was adapted from the "Transitions (ESL)" handout from the University of North Carolina Writing Center.**