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Go With the Flow: Write With Transition Words and Phrases

By Shaun Fawcett

One of the most common weaknesses I see in day-to-day writing is poor logical flow from one idea or point to the next. This usually takes the form of a bunch of seemingly unrelated phrases thrown together with little or no sense of sequence, continuity, or relativity.

Although the overall subject may be obvious, the words to describe it seem to be scattered on the page like an almost random set of unconnected thoughts. On a regular basis, I see letters and reports in which each phrase seems to be independent of the one before and the one after, when in reality there is an actual sequential and/or logical flow.

Consider the following three sentence example:

1. The entire building had to be searched.
2. They started the search on the third floor.
3. It took three hours to complete the search.

Notice that the three separate statements are all valid sentences. They convey the bare essential facts of the situation, but nothing more. In fact, they raise almost more questions than they answer. For example:

- Was it a serious incident?
- Had it ever happened before?
- Why did they start on the third floor?
- What about the first two floors?
- Is three hours a long time for that?
- How long does it usually take?

These are all logical (and obvious) questions that the average person might ask when reading a paragraph made up of the three sentences above.

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Now, let's transform these three statements, using transition phrases, as follows:

UNLIKE the previous minor incident, this time the entire building had to be searched. BECAUSE the fire was still smoking on the first two floors, they started on the third, working upwards, covering the first two last. CONSEQUENTLY, it took them a full three hours before they finally completed the typical two-hour job.

Notice the use of the transition words: UNLIKE, BECAUSE, and CONSEQUENTLY. Using these three words has allowed us to easily connect the three independent sentences and give them a sense of chronological order and logical flow. They also allow us to answer ALL of the obvious questions, either with the transition word itself, or by adding a couple more words.

In short, transition words/phrases have turned three dry independent phrases into a little story that makes sense to the reader.

These types of words/phrases are ideal for allowing one to easily connect thoughts, and create logical sequences between sentences and paragraphs. They are usually inserted at the beginning of a sentence and normally refer directly back to the previous sentence and/or paragraph without repeating the specific subject.

The following paragraphs list some of the more common transition words and phrases that will help make your text more understandable and interesting to the reader. For each one, I have included a typical example of how the word/phrase might be used in a typical sentence.

Note that I have capitalized the transition words/phrases for emphasis and easy identification.

CAUSE AND EFFECT...

THEN, he moved on to the next work station.

AS A RESULT, the team lost the game.

FOR THIS REASON, she always went home for the weekend.

THE RESULT WAS always predictable.

WHAT FOLLOWED was as painful as it was inevitable.

IN RESPONSE, he quickly upped the ante.

THEREFORE, the aircraft overshot the runway.

THUS, it was just a matter of time.

BECAUSE OF THIS, the results were always the same.

CONSEQUENTLY, he was no longer friends with Frank.

THE REACTION to this event was swift and decisive.

IN CONTRAST TO...

UNLIKE last year, this one was highly profitable.

DIFFERENT from this, was our approach to manufacturing.

IN SPITE OF the dot com bust, the company prospered.

ON THE OTHER HAND, earnings per share have increased.

ON THE CONTRARY, the impact was less than expected.

OPPOSING that idea was the move to new technologies.
HOWEVER, that approach may actually prove better.
CONTRARY to his findings, the revenue picture is good.
NEVERTHELESS, something still appears to be missing.

SEQUENCE AND RELATIVITY...

THEN, each one followed in numerical sequence.
IN ADDITION, a fourth material was added to the mix.
TO ENUMERATE, first there was the car, second the boat,...
NEXT in the series was the “outrigger” brand line.
BESIDES THAT, there were two other possible sources.

SIMILARITY AND COMPARISON...

LIKE always, he took the company on a dangerous course.
SAME as before, he managed to meet all of the requirements.
SIMILAR things were known to happen at certain times.
CLOSE to that was the result of the second round of voting.
LIKEWISE, they made similar changes in the factory.
ALSO, there were the worker’s families to consider.

NEAR that one, was where we found the faulty component.

EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLE...

FOR EXAMPLE, last year’s model was underpowered.
ONE SUCH occurrence was last week’s power outage.
FOR INSTANCE, earnings this year are higher than last.
TO ILLUSTRATE, he went to Chicago just to make his point.
ALSO, there is a new approach to sheet-metal molding.
THAT TOO, just goes to make my point even stronger.
TO DEMONSTRATE, I will use the new model throughout.

The above are just examples, and there many other such transition words and phrases that are used in everyday conversation and writing. In my opinion, appropriate use of these words/phrases is the number one technique for making any type of writing flow more logically and clearly.

Bottom line: Smooth, orderly and logical transitions from one thought to the other, one sentence to the next, and one paragraph to another, are key to creating clear meaning and flow in any document.

Transition words and phrases will achieve this for you.

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Shaun Fawcett is Webmaster of two of the most visited writing-help Web sites on the Net. He is the author of numerous “how-to” books on everyday practical writing help. He also writes about how to create and publish books and ebooks. His main “writing tools” site is:

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Power Words And Phrases

By Al Martinovic

Power Words And Phrases by Al Martinovic

I like to use power phrases when writing sales material. These power phrases add punch to a line or a paragraph and I usually use them to start off a sentence.

You can generally find a lot of "power phrases" when reading good sales copy. I usually keep a notebook nearby so that whenever I come across a line or a phrase that I like in sales material, I write it down for possible future use.

They are also great for writer's block too. When I am stuck in the middle of writing, I'll usually refer to my power phrases, and the next thing I know, the sentences sometimes start writing themselves.

Some examples of the power phrases I use include:

"Listen closely..."

"As you may already know..."

"Now, I don't know about you..."

"Well, I've got news for you..."

"Let me explain..."

"And best of all..."

"In fact..."

"Here's the bottom line..."

"Quite frankly..."

"Now, I know what you're thinking..."

"Take a deep breathe and relax..."

"The answer is yes..."

Power phrases can be used to grab and hold people's attention so that they keep reading. Some may even call these "hypnotic" phrases.

Even single words can invoke a reaction in some people that can be used to add "punch" to your sales material. I call these power words.

Some power words to use in your marketing include:

Free, Powerful, Incredible, Easy, Shocking, Cheap, Revealed, Best, Uncovered, Hidden, Proven, Results, Revolutionary, Profits, Fantastic, Inside, Learn, Enhance, Hottest, New, Improved, Unbelievable, Ultimate, Offer, Master, Scientific, Private, Breakthrough, Save, Guaranteed, Tricks, You, Love, Limited, Special, Secrets

You can use power words to add punch to a headline, sentence, a short ad, or whatever you fancy.

Those are just a few of the power words and phrases that I have collected over the years.

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Do yourself a favor:

Another power phrase...?

No really... do yourself a favor:

Always keep a notebook nearby and look out for words or phrases that capture your attention in sales material. Then write it down. If it captured your attention, it's sure to capture other people's attention too.

And over time, you'll have plenty of power words and phrases to choose from when writing your sales material.

They sure make life alot easier...

And profitable too!

Al Martinovic publishes a popular internet marketing newsletter at <http://www.millenniummarketers.com> and runs a successful home business at <http://www.ineedsokes.com>



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