In addition to simple words and phrases used as transitionals (conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, and such), other words and other structures serve transitional functions.

**Sentence adverbs**

Another kind of transitional word occurs at the beginning of a clause or sentence, and indicates the writer’s / speaker’s attitude toward, or a general comment on, the sentence topic or content. These are known as sentence or sentential adverbs. These can sometimes come at the end of the sentence, especially in colloquial style, as more of an afterthought without the nuance of emphasis.

- actually, apparently, basically, by the way, briefly, certainly, clearly, conceivably, confidentially, curiously, especially, evidently, fortunately, hopefully, hypothetically, ideally, incidentally, indeed, interestingly, ironically, naturally, oddly, predictably, presumably, regrettably, seriously, strangely, surprisingly, thankfully, theoretically, therefore, truthfully, ultimately, unfortunately, wisely

For example:

**Apparently,** an overwhelming majority in the Senate would be assured, if they can win seats in North Carolina, Minnesota, and Mississippi.

**Thankfully,** the check arrived on time. **Unfortunately,** the package had been misdirected to the wrong city, and in the process the contents were damaged.

Compare this to the flow of a sentence like “...the contents were damaged, unfortunately” - in such a sentence, the adverb is added at the end, like an afterthought. A sentence adverb at the end tends to sound more colloquial, and as an afterthought, it has a bit more emphasis, which breaks the flow more.

**Especially,** we would like to contain our company’s bleeding of cash.

(Note that *especially* as a sentence adverb at the beginning of a clause or sentence is considered colloquial or informal style; it is not used so commonly like this in formal or academic writing, where it would be better to place it inside the main clause, or to omit it completely.)

**Topical adverbs**

Topical adverbs (this is my own name for them – this is not a standard term) are somewhat similar to sentence adverbs, except that they function to identify or qualify the topic of the coming clause. This adverb is similar to a normal adverb within a sentence, but moved to the beginning to make the topic more explicit, to emphasize the speaker’s point, to give it more prominence, to shift the topic to a new but somewhat related topic, or to avoid too many other adverbs inside the sentence.
Economically, this would be infeasible to implement while the markets are too unstable. (cf. “This would be economically infeasible to implement”)

Politically, it would be unwise for the senator to suddenly propose such an outrageously expensive funding project at an economically depressed time as this.

Many words could be used like this, such as these, and many others, such as adverbs related to specific topics or fields of study:

- scientifically
- mathematically
- artistically
- financially
- intellectually
- philosophically
- computationally
- psychologically
- economically
- politically
- biologically
- environmentally
- presently
- evolutionarily
- emotionally

A fairly similar expression is in terms of X, for identifying a specific topic or a particular aspect of discussion. However, one should not overuse this, as using it too often can sound mechanical, artificial, or “officialese.”

The idea looks good on paper, but in terms of use of the company’s resources, this would not be feasible in the current economic environment.

**Ordinal transitions**

These are terms like first, second, third, etc. Forms like first, second, third are more North American style, while firstly, secondly, thirdly... are more British style. One should not mix the British and American terms inconsistently, and in academic writing it is better to avoid the colloquial first of all. In English academic writing, these ordinal transitionals are less commonly used, and are more common in less formal writing (or on essay exams). In academic writing, using these regularly can make the writing sound mechanical, artificial or formulaic, so these should be used conservatively, e.g., when explaining more complex or abstract sequences of ideas that may be more difficult for the reader to follow. Otherwise, it is sufficient to start sentences with full noun subjects without these ordinal transition, and the logical flow would generally be sufficiently clear in academic writing.

**There is / are**

Sentences beginning with there is or there are function to introduce new topics (e.g., sentence subjects) to the discussion.

- There’s a unicorn in my garden!
- There’s not much that can be done about this problem.

This is more common in informal writing or conversation. In academic writing, there is/are is less commonly used. Instead, academic writers simply start a new sentence with a full noun subject, or begin a new paragraph for a more significant topic shift.

- The situation seems serious, but unfortunately, not much can be done about this problem at this time.

**There + intransitive verb**

Also used for shifts in topics or in the focus of the flow of the writing; this is more common in academic, formal, and also narrative writing (e.g., for shifting the reader’s attention to a new scene or to a new thing that appears in the narrative scene). This is less colloquial than there is/are for academic writing purposes. The intransitive verbs that can be used with this are verbs whose meanings have to do with existence (exist, live, occur, appear, happen, prevail, remain)
and change of state (*disappear, vanish, arrive, die, come, arise*). The sentence subject comes after the verb.

There appears to be a problem here.

There arose such a clamor in the house.

**Inverted sentences (inversion)**

An adjectival, adverbial, participial, or prepositional phrase is placed at the front of the sentence, displacing the subject after the verb. This serves as a segue (transition) from one topic to a new but closely related topic in a narrative, and makes for a smoother and more interesting flow of topics. It is also sometimes used in formal and academic writing as well as narrative writing. This occurs mainly with intransitive verbs and some passive verbs.

Adjective phrase

Participial phrase

Adverb phrase

Prepositional phrase

\[ \text{+ Verb + Subject} \]

You’re driving as fast as you like on the highway and feel like the king of the road – then zooming up from behind like a rocket there comes a rival contender, bullying you to get out of the way.

On the sign were written the foreboding words, “No passing zone”.

Closely related to *there*-sentences are inverted sentences, such as this one.

Quite frustrated was the little mouse, being unable to get around the house cat.

Inverted sentences can also be used with *there* for a similarly smooth flow to a new, less expected topic or item.

You’re driving as fast as you like on the highway and feel like the king of the road – then zooming up from behind like a rocket *there comes* a rival contender, bullying you to get out of the way.

**Verbs with inversion and *there*-sentences**

Sentence inversion and *there* constructions (*there is, there seems...*) occur with intransitive verbs\(^1\) of the following types, and occasionally, certain passive verbs that indicate location rather than action\(^2\). Inversion is also limited to introducing related topics – items related to the context or inferrable from the context, rather than something entirely new. The *there* construction at the beginning of a sentence or clause is for introducing new items to the discourse. These are often used in narratives, and often in the past tense.

verbs of existence: \( \text{be, exist, remain, tend, stand, sit} \)

verbs of appearance: \( \text{appear, disappear, arise, vanish, seem} \)

verbs of change of state: *change, occur, happen, break, die, fall, shrink, condense, freeze, grow*

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\(^1\) One should keep in mind that some verbs can be transitive or intransitive, with different meanings, e.g., *break,* *change, increase, decrease,* and many others.

\(^2\) These types of verbs share a common linguistic property: they are considered agentless verbs – the subject of the verb is not a volitional agent (performer, doer, actor) of the action, but a non-agent (not doing any action) or non-volitional (not controlling the action). The motion verbs act somewhat like these agentless verbs in these constructions because they also convey a change of state or appearance onto the scene (e.g., *there came a man from Mars* indicates appearance upon the story scene).
certain verbs of motion:  *flow, fall, arrive, come, go, walk, turn, run, return, roll, open, close*

passive location verbs:  *be located, be found*

There arose such a clatter, I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.

There appeared a cheetah in the distance.

There happened to be a hefty fine for such behavior.

In the hallway stood an angry chicken, holding an axe with both wings.

In the middle of the field grew a giant beanstalk, reaching to the sky.

**Identifying (restrictive) relative clause**

Most relative clauses are of this type. The relative clause (RC) identifies or specifies which item is discussed (e.g., not any X but the X that we saw yesterday). (In logic terms, it restricts the set of possible X’s to one particular X, hence the unusual term, ‘restrictive clause’). This kind of RC only requires a comma if the relative pronoun is separated from the modified noun by other words (2), or in complex possessive relative clause constructions.

We will hear a talk by the man who invented the warp drive engine.

We will listen to the engineer tonight, who is the inventor of the warp drive engine.

The warp drive engine, whose fields were causing environmental damage, will be taken offline for repair.

**Non-identifying (non-restrictive) relative clause**

Simply adds further descriptive information about the modified noun – most commonly, a proper noun or specific, known item. It is always separated by commas from the rest of the sentence in writing (by a voice pause / break in speaking). This is equivalent to a grammatical appositive (like the second sentence), which simply adds further descriptive information, not information to identify it or distinguish it from other entities.

Al Gore, who happens to be a highly advanced robot with artificial intelligence, will be speaking tonight at the engineering conference.

Al Gore, a highly advanced artificial intelligence robot, will be speaking tonight at the engineering conference.

**Topic shift markers**

Some words are used to manage shifts to new topics, or shifting back to previously mentioned topics (reshifts). In colloquial English and narratives, *now* can be used for new topics or reshifts; *anyway* can be used colloquially for reshifts. In various kinds of contexts, *as to, as for, as regards, regarding, etc.* can be used for reshifts, but in academic writing these are less common; one should be careful not to overuse these to avoid sounding stylistically too mechanical, artificial, colloquial, or formulaic.

Now, as I was saying...

As for the unresolved matter of late orders, we’ve decided to consult with the home office.

As regards your proposal, we currently cannot undertake such a complex project.
Clefts
Clefts take the form of “it's the ___ that” or the wh-cleft, “what ____ is ____”. These are used in colloquial English for emphasis or making a contrast; thus, these are not common in academic writing.

Will we milk the goat today? No, it’s the yak that I need to milk.
What I need to do is milk is the yak.

Paragraphs
Paragraph breaks indicate a shift to a new topic. (Hence, using there expressions or first, second, etc. to begin topic sentences and new paragraphs often sounds redundant in academic writing, when paragraph structure already conveys this flow of thought.)

Punctuation: Colons and semicolons
Semicolons join two independent sentences or main clauses. They are like a period or full stop, but by conjoining two main clauses, a relationship between the two clauses is implied.

These are used in colloquial English for emphasis or making a contrast; these are not common in academic writing.

They are also used for separating longer or more complex items in a list.

Several proposed solutions to spiraling costs from medical malpractice lawsuits can be considered, such as enacting tort reforms to limit the size of awards in malpractice cases; making it easier to strip incompetent doctors of medical licenses; enacting legal limits on the kinds of lawsuits possible; and forcibly deporting some of the excessive numbers of tort lawyers from the U.S. to a deserted country.

Colons are similar, but they imply a closer relationship between the main clause and what follows. Colons draw the reader's attention or anticipation to what follows, and are often used to begin a list or enumeration of items.

Four languages are spoken in Switzerland: Swiss German in the majority of cantons; French in the western areas; Italian in some southern and southeastern areas; and Rhaeto-Romanish in the St. Gallen area.

Cohesive devices
Besides transitionals, some words indicate logical connectedness between items being discussed, or cohesion. The most common forms for maintaining this kind of flow are illustrated below.

Some grammar forms and words serve to create topic continuity and flow, with continued references to a person, thing, or idea in the discourse. The referent (the thing, person, or concept referred to) is mentioned with different types of words to avoid redundancy, and yet to maintain coherence (logical flow) and cohesion (flow and connectedness, grammatically and in terms of the flow of referents talked about). How often these cohesive devices are used may depend on the type of writing. Some kinds of technical writing are rather dense, so key words may be repeated, or synonyms used, rather than pronouns, to avoid confusion when the

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3 The following is adapted from [http://www.virtualsalt.com/transits.htm](http://www.virtualsalt.com/transits.htm) [Harris, Robert. “Evaluating Internet Research Sources.” VirtualSalt. 15 June 2007. 20 Apr. 2009.].
reader has to juggle a number of different terms at the same time in his/her working memory.

**Keyword Repetition**

A word which the discussion is focused on is repeated. This is more common in the following situations: (1) multiple possible referents or items are discussed, especially in more technical writing, and (2) repetition for rhetorical effect, especially in less formal writing or speaking.

- Participants in the study were allowed a choice of several options: a direct rebate of 10%, a significant discount on a purchase of an extended warranty, or a coupon for 20% on a future purchase. Overwhelmingly, subjects chose the 10% rebate option.
- Many cities are overcrowded. This city is overcrowded. This city lacks resources. But now there is help for this city.

**Synonyms**

The meaning of a good synonym is close enough so that the thought continues, but is different enough so that the idea expands and gains greater definition than it would by simply repeating the same word over (and this avoids redundancy and boring repetition).

- His new car is fast and powerful. But is such a vehicle legal? And don’t hot rods like that pollute the air?
- We hiked to the peak, and then we walked from the peak to the bluff Tuesday. It was quite a trek.

**Pronouns and possessive pronouns**

In sentences like these,

- We have plums on the table. Eat all you like, but check them for ripeness or bruises first.
- We had two Great Danes, a male and a female, and their size often intimidated visitors.

**Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives**

Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives include this, that, these, those (pronouns if used alone, as in “this is it” and adjectives if used to modify a noun, as in “this car is fast”). These are useful for flow, direction and emphasis. Sometimes for clarity, a demonstrative adjective can be used instead of a pronoun (e.g., “this proposal is not ideal” rather than “this is not ideal”).

- Some people suggest giving up coffee. This idea, however, is ridiculous.
- Yes, Gators are our best selling shoes. That brand, however, is sold out right now.

In formal and academic writing, this as a pronoun often refers back to a whole idea discussed previously, as well as this situation / idea / proposal / result / etc.

- A general astronomy conference voted to demote Pluto to a planetoid from its previous status as a regular planet, as many general astronomers argued strongly for a particular criterion for defining a planet that would exclude Pluto (a vague criterion that a true planet “clears its own orbit” or is not influenced by another planet’s orbit). This, however, is strongly rejected by many planetary astronomers, who still argue strongly that Pluto is a true planet. Overall, however, both sides have valid points.