

Transition Words in Context

We designed this resource to help you learn and practice using transitions to make your writing more cohesive. Start by reading the following text on U.S. TV comedy, where we've highlighted some transitions students find challenging. As you read, notice the bolded transition words and phrases—you will practice using these later.

The Subversion of TV Comedy

Many people look for a feeling of escape in TV, movies, or music. **For this reason**, some critics view pop culture as unworthy of serious study. **However**,¹ cultural studies scholars and media critics have shown compellingly how pop culture reflects and shapes social hierarchies.

Looking **specifically** at TV sitcoms illuminates the long history of pop culture reflecting changing social norms. **For instance**, in the 1960s and 1970s, shows like *That Girl* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* projected two likeable, single, working women into living rooms as the U.S. was becoming accustomed to young women choosing to enter—and stay—in the workforce. **Moreover**,² seeing Mary Tyler Moore as an independent, career-minded woman had particular symbolic value because of her previous role as beloved stay-at-home mom and wife in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. **Though**³ *The Dick Van Dyke Show* centered on Rob Petrie as the “head of household,” Moore’s character Laura regularly pushed the boundaries set by previous TV wives, **not the least**⁴ in her wardrobe. As Laura, Moore was the first woman to wear pants on the TV screen. She became **not just** a feminist icon **but** a fashion icon **as well**.

Besides introducing TV audiences to new cultural norms, comedy can also challenge our existing cultural assumptions. **In fact**,⁵ because the genre functions by subverting our expectations, it has the potential to make incisive social commentary. One way comedy does this is by making light of sensitive subjects, potentially causing offense. **Of course**, not everyone takes the offense seriously: “**Besides**, it’s just a joke,” they might say. **For others, though**, questioning exactly what makes “a joke” funny can clarify precisely what dominant class, gender, and/or racial assumptions are being made. **That is to say**,⁶ comedy can raise bigger questions about *who* gets to decide what is funny. **Indeed**,⁷ pop culture opens up important conversations about censorship, social values, and expectations.

Check your understanding of these transitions (numbered in the model passage) by answering the following multiple-choice questions. Consider how each transitional word or phrase is used in the context of the broader paragraph and passage.

Referring to the model text, choose the answer that best describes the transition's function.

1. *However*
 - a. signals disagreement with the idea that pop culture is unworthy of serious study.
 - b. signals disagreement with what cultural scholars and media critics believe.
 - c. introduces an explanation of why pop culture is unworthy of serious study.

2. *Moreover*
 - a. adds a new detail to highlight women's changing roles in society.
 - b. elaborates on the previous idea about women's roles in society.
 - c. *both* adds a new idea and elaborates on the previous idea.

3. *Though*
 - a. introduces an idea about the *The Dick Van Dyke Show* that the writer refutes.
 - b. reorients the argument towards men's changing roles in society
 - c. signals that gender roles on the show are not entirely traditional

4. *Not the least*
 - a. signals that the character, Laura, didn't push boundaries with her clothes/wardrobe.
 - b. signals that the character, Laura, pushed boundaries *mainly* with her dress/wardrobe.
 - c. signals that the character, Laura, pushed boundaries in more ways than one.

5. *In fact*
 - a. introduces a fact about the comedy genre.
 - b. adds a detail about how the comedy genre challenges our expectations or assumptions.
 - c. provides an example of a cultural assumption people make.

6. *That is to say*
 - a. serves to rephrase and emphasize a previously stated idea.
 - b. introduces a new piece of evidence to support the writer's argument.
 - c. underscores an idea that the author disagrees with.

7. *Indeed*
 - a. reiterates the argument the writer has been building on in the essay
 - b. presents a new idea for the reader to consider.
 - c. signals the author agrees with popular conversations about pop culture.

Practice Using Trickier Transitions

Choose five (or more) transitions from the model text, or from the list on the next page:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Next, you'll write a paragraph that uses all five transitions appropriately, responding to one of the following prompts:

- How do TV comedies in the U.S. differ from comedies in other countries or cultural contexts? In one paragraph, consider differences or similarities in purpose, humor, genre, and audience.
- Consider your favorite TV show from the angle of the social commentary it makes or the cultural norms it challenges. In one paragraph, describe the ways this show achieves these goals.

List of Transition Words^{1,2}

If you want to show...

Addition furthermore moreover in addition also besides further and not only...but also both X and Y as well as	Contrast in contrast however yet at the same time nevertheless though although conversely while on the one hand/on the other hand on the contrary	Similarly/Comparison similarly likewise similar to by comparison in a similar manner in the same way by the same token in similar fashion	Example for example for instance to illustrate specifically such as in particular namely one example is for one not the least
Emphasis indeed of course in fact most importantly above all certainly besides further indeed undoubtedly especially truly	Cause because because of since due to on account of	Effect/Result/Consequence therefore thus as a result as a consequence hence consequently for this reason accordingly so	Clarification that is to say in other words put more simply to put it another way in brief in sum

¹“Transitional Words and Phrases,” *UW-Madison Writer’s Handbook*, University of Wisconsin-Madison (March 5, 2018), <https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Transitions.html>

²Joanna Taraba, “Transitional Words and Phrases,” *Writer’s Web: Focusing/Connecting Ideas*, University of Richmond Writing Center, <http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/trans1.html>