

TRANSITIONS IN PARAGRAPHS

The following are examples of transitions from one paragraph to the next. Notice how the author moves from one idea to the next:

- From Spradley and Mann's *The Cocktail Waitress*:

[...] Waitresses use these categories to identify who people are, anticipate their behavior, and plan strategies for performing their role.

Although waitresses often learn names and individual identities, it is not necessary. What every girl must know is the category to which people belong.

- From Morgan's *The American Revolution: An American View*:

[...] After pushing Washington across the Delaware River by December, he called a halt for the winter.

Washington and his subordinates meanwhile were learning about the war the hard way.

- From Tompkins' "*Indians*": *Textualism, Morality, and the Problem of History*:

[...] If studying history couldn't put us in touch with actual events and their causes, then what was to prevent such atrocities from happening again?

For a while, I remained at this impasse. But through analyzing the process by which I had reached it, I eventually arrived at an understanding which seemed to offer a way out.

A good strategy to remember for any transition is to put old information first and new or important information last in a sentence:

- From Williams' *Style*:

Better: Some astonishing questions about the nature of the universe have been raised by scientists exploring *black holes in space*. A black hole is created by the collapse of a dead star into *a point perhaps no larger than a marble*. So much matter compressed into so little volume changes the fabric of space around it in puzzling ways. (Notice how the new information (italicized) begins subsequent sentences as old information (underlined).

Worse: Some astonishing questions about the nature of the universe have been raised by scientists exploring *black holes in space*. *The collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble* creates a black hole. The fabric of space around it is changed in *puzzling ways* by so much matter compressed into so little volume. (Notice here how the second and third sentences begin with new information, which not only makes the passage read awkwardly but also taxes short-term memory.)