

## Development and Transitions!

Your paper should develop, roll out, unfold, or unravel in a logical and/or artful way. The best papers are also surprising and interesting as they unfurl.

To help the reader along the journey of your paper, use topic sentences! These are so much fun to discover and to write.

### **Topic Sentences**

Every paragraph should have a topic sentence. Look to Claire Stanford's "Do Sidewalks Talk" which we went over as a class. Notice how she repeats words or images from the previous paragraph to create coherence and move the piece along.

The topic sentence appears at the beginning of the paragraph and often it is the first sentence. The topic sentence is usually general enough to express the paragraph's overall subject and subtly link back to the previous paragraph or idea. But it should also be specific enough to point to reader forward.

Topic sentences are akin to signposts. I remember driving over Snoqualmie Pass one year during a blinding snowstorm. I was confused. How far had I come? How far did I have to go? Where was I? Then I saw this sign:



I was so relieved. I knew where I was and where I was going. I wasn't sure exactly how many cars I'd see in the ditch on my way to the top, but I knew how far I had to go and how far I'd come.

### **Transition Words**

What is a transition?

These glue words in topic sentences or within the paragraph are magic. They are akin to taking your reader by the hand and leading them through your essay. They are a kindness. Use these to create a path for the reader through your paragraphs or your paper. Make sure you know the meaning of the transition, because each transition is a mini-sign post.

Here's a list of "40 Useful Words and Phrases for Top-Notch Essays."

<http://debbiejlee.com/298spring20/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/40-Useful-Words-and-Phrases-for-Top-Notch-Essays1.pdf>

### **Development**

The way you organize your paragraphs is also known as development. You can organize your paper from **least** important/interesting/surprising/convincing point to **most** important/most interesting/surprising/convincing. Or, the other way around.

Or you can let the logical links and transitions that you discover in the writing and outlining process be your guide. You can develop your paper through compare/contrast, for/against, point/reversal, or a mixture of different organizations.

Whatever method you use, make sure you feel in control of how the piece develops and use your topic sentences and transitions to help your reader through.

This handout may be of use to some of you about different types of paragraphs.

[https://irsc-asc.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/8/1/31813909/e2\\_methods\\_of\\_essay\\_development.pdf](https://irsc-asc.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/8/1/31813909/e2_methods_of_essay_development.pdf)

### **Headings and Subheadings**

If you'd like to try using headings/subheadings, you are certainly welcome to. I like to subhead my papers as I'm writing, and sometimes I take the subheadings out when I'm finished and just let the topic sentences and transitions do the magic work.

If you use headings/subheadings, don't overdo it since this is a fairly short paper. This MLA Guide is a good place to start. But as this guide states, subheadings "should never be used to compensate for poor structure or to explain an underdeveloped idea."

<https://style.mla.org/styling-headings-and-subheadings/>

Activity – 10 minutes

--Using the handout "40 Useful Words and Phrases for Top-Notch Essays," analyze several sentences of your choice from "Do Sidewalks Talk" or "Toward a Recovery of Nineteenth-Century Farming Handbooks."

--How does the author use transitional words and phrases to link sentences, paragraphs, and the larger ideas of the piece?

Activity – write two or three topic sentences for your paper right now. 10 minutes.