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Transitions
Strategies & Practice

Contents include

• Specialized strategies for approaching every question type within every domain on the Reading & Writing Section of the Digital SAT, along with realistic practice questions to help you get comfortable applying them.
• Guides to all the important grammar and punctuation concepts covered on the test, along with realistic practice questions to help you master them
• Guides to difficult text types, including poetry and texts with graphics, along with realistic practice questions to help you approach them more effectively
• A carefully curated list of high impact words, along with additional tips to help you develop your vocabulary
• 4 full-length practice modules with comprehensive answer explanations for additional practice and self-assessment

Transitions

Transitions Questions require you to determine the most logical transitional word or phrase to connect two sentences or, on occasion, two parts of a sentence. They represent one of the two question types that make up the Expression of Ideas Domain of the Reading & Writing Section of the Digital SAT. This guide offers strategies to help you answer these questions effectively, along with drills to help you practice applying those strategies in solving questions similar to those you will encounter on the actual test.

How to Approach Transitions Questions

We've found that students who earn top scores on the test tend to use the following steps when approaching Transitions Questions:

1. Read and make sure to understand the parts before and after the blank. This step is important because if you don't understand the parts before and after the blank, you won't be able to determine the relationship between them.

2. Think about the relationship between the parts before and after the blank. This step is important because if you can't determine the relationship between the parts before and after the blank, you won't be able to evaluate the answer choices.

3. Examine the answer choices and pick the one that best expresses the relationship. If an answer does not jump out to you, try eliminating answer choices that obviously fail to reflect the relationship.

Let's use those steps to tackle a question similar to the ones you will encounter on the test:

Trilobites were marine arthropods that thrived for over 270 million years before suddenly vanishing from the fossil record around the end of the Permian period. While the exact reasons for their extinction remain unknown, a number of compelling theories have emerged. _____ one hypothesis suggests that their extinction was the result of environmental changes such as fluctuations in sea levels, global cooling, and oxygen depletion in the oceans.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. Still,
B. Consequently,
C. Fittingly,
D. For instance,

The part before the blank indicates that there are “a number of compelling theories” about why trilobites went extinct. The part after presents one specific hypothesis, which is that “their extinction was the result of environmental changes.” Therefore, the part after the blank seems to be providing an example of the claim in the part before the blank. The answer that would best indicate this relationship is (D).

Transition Categories

If you are having trouble identifying the relationship between the part before and after the blank, it may help to consider the relationships listed below. The vast majority of transitional words and phrases that have appeared in answer choices on Transitions Questions on the Digital SAT fall into one of these categories.

Effect transitions indicate that the author is presenting a result or logical outcome. Common examples include *therefore*, *for this reason*, *as a result*, etc.

Continuation transitions indicate that the author is presenting a new idea. This new idea must not go against the idea that came before it but it still needs to be a new idea—in other words, it cannot merely support the previous idea. Common examples include *in addition*, *moreover*, *likewise*, etc.

Time & Process transitions indicate that the author is indicating a shift in time or a step in a process. Common examples include *currently*, *increasingly*, *subsequently*, *next*, etc.

Contrast transitions indicate that the author is challenging an expectation created by the previous idea or presenting an opposing idea. Common examples include *however*, *nevertheless*, *by contrast*, etc.

Illustration & Emphasis transitions indicate that the author is supporting or emphasizing a previous idea with an example, detail, or further explanation. Common examples include *for instance*, *indeed, in fact*, etc.

Conclusion & Summarization transitions indicate that the author is restating a point or presenting a conclusion to an argument. Common examples include *in other words, overall, ultimately*, etc.

Note that there are a handful of transitions that have appeared on past tests that do not fall neatly into any of the above categories. Therefore, if none of the above categories reflect the relationship between the sentences, you may need to think outside the box and consider other possible relationships.

Transitional Words & Phrases

In general, to answer transition questions effectively, there are two things you need to be able to do well. First, you need to be able to discern the relationship between two sentences. Although this can take a little practice, the exercises in this guide can help. Second, you need to be familiar with the words

and phrases that are likely to appear in the answer choices of transition questions. For this purpose, we have provided a list of all transitions that have appeared in answer choices in the questions released by the College Board, along with the number of times each has appeared and the number of times it has been the correct answer.

Transitions on Previous Digital SAT Tests

transition	# appeared	# correct	type
accordingly	2	0	effect
actually	1	0	other
additionally	9	3	continuation
admittedly	1	0	contrast
afterward	1	1	time/process
alternately	1	0	other
alternatively	2	1	other
as a result	13	6	effect
besides	2	0	other
by comparison	2	1	contrast
by contrast	11	5	contrast
consequently	8	2	effect
conversely	2	0	contrast
currently	1	1	time/process
earlier	3	1	time/process
elsewhere	1	0	other
finally	2	1	time/process
first	1	1	time/process
first of all	1	0	time/process
firstly	1	0	time/process
fittingly	2	1	other
for example	21	5	illustration/emphasis
for instance	12	2	illustration/emphasis
for this reason	6	3	effect
furthermore	5	0	continuation

granted	4	1	contrast
hence	3	1	effect
however	19	6	contrast
in addition	7	3	continuation
in any case	1	0	other
in comparison	5	0	contrast
in conclusion	5	0	conclusion/summarization
in contrast	3	1	contrast
in fact	7	3	illustration/emphasis
in many cases	1	1	other
in other words	13	1	conclusion/summarization
in particular	2	0	illustration/emphasis
in sum	2	0	conclusion/summarization
in the first place	1	0	time/process
in turn	1	0	time/process
increasingly	1	1	time/process
indeed	11	2	illustration/emphasis
lastly	2	0	time/process
later	2	2	time/process
likewise	13	1	continuation
meanwhile	5	1	contrast
moreover	7	1	continuation
nevertheless	18	2	contrast
next	6	2	time/process
nonetheless	1	1	contrast
nowadays	1	0	time/process
on the contrary	4	0	other
previously	2	2	time/process
rather	2	0	contrast
regardless	8	0	other
second	1	1	time/process

secondly	3	0	time/process
similarly	18	3	continuation
soon	1	0	time/process
specifically	14	4	illustration/emphasis
still	3	1	contrast
subsequently	2	0	time/process
that is	3	1	conclusion/summarization
that said	2	1	contrast
then	2	2	time/process
there	1	1	place
therefore	10	2	effect
though	1	1	contrast
thus	7	2	effect
to conclude	1	0	conclusion/summarization
to that end	1	0	effect
today	1	0	time/process
ultimately	2	1	conclusion/summarization

Judging by this list, two significant trends emerge.

First, all of the transitional words and phrases on this list are conjunctive adverbs. That means you will not see transitions like since, because, while, and although. More importantly, it means that you will not need to consider grammar, because all of the answer choices will be grammatically equivalent. This is a significant difference from previous versions of the SAT, and something most other textbooks fail to reflect.

Second, there are several transitions that are tested very regularly. However, there are also a large number of transitions that have only appeared once or twice. This suggests that, in addition to the familiar transitions, there is a chance that you will see one or two oddball transitions on the test, perhaps one that has never appeared before. To prepare you for this situation, we have provided a secondary list of transitions that have not yet appeared but which we would not be surprised to see appear on a future test. Students hoping for a perfect score would be wise to learn them in addition to the ones in the list above.

Additional Transitions to Learn

transition	# appeared	# correct	type
as such	n/a	n/a	effect
at any rate	n/a	n/a	other
basically	n/a	n/a	conclusion/summarization
clearly	n/a	n/a	other
despite this	n/a	n/a	contrast
effectively	n/a	n/a	conclusion/summarization
essentially	n/a	n/a	conclusion/summarization
given this	n/a	n/a	effect
in effect	n/a	n/a	conclusion/summarization
in short	n/a	n/a	conclusion/summarization
instead	n/a	n/a	contrast
namely	n/a	n/a	illustration/emphasis
occasionally	n/a	n/a	time/process
of course	n/a	n/a	contrast
on the other hand	n/a	n/a	contrast
originally	n/a	n/a	time/process
otherwise	n/a	n/a	contrast
surprisingly	n/a	n/a	other
true	n/a	n/a	contrast

Beyond the Transition Categories

For most transitions questions, merely identifying which of the broad transition categories best expresses the relationship will be enough to determine the correct answer. However, there may be occasional questions where you will be presented with multiple transitions within the same category and be forced to differentiate between them. Consider the example below.

Both alligators and crocodiles are semi-aquatic reptiles with long tails, webbed feet, and strong jaws filled with sharp teeth, but there are crucial differences between them. Alligators generally have darker, more blackish-gray skin and prefer freshwater environments such as ponds, marshes, and rivers. _____ crocodiles tend to have a lighter, more olive brown color and can be found in both freshwater and saltwater habitats.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. Nevertheless,
B. By contrast,
C. In conclusion,
D. For instance,

The part before the blank discusses features of alligators. The part after the blank discusses features of crocodiles that differ from those of alligators. Therefore, the relationship is one of contrast. Both (A) and (B) indicate contrast. However, “nevertheless” can only be used when the part before the blank establishes an expectation that the part after the blank goes against. In this case, the previous sentence focuses entirely on alligators and does not establish any expectation about crocodiles, so it would be inappropriate to use in this case. The correct answer is “by contrast,” which is used to indicate a difference between two things. Given the possibility that you may need to make more nuanced distinctions between transitional words and phrases within a category, students who hope to earn a high score are advised to make an effort to master the usage of the most common transitions.

Transitions Practice

Transitions #1

Believed to have been created in the late 1400s, the Voynich Manuscript is an illustrated codex hand-written in an ornate and indecipherable script. _____, it has puzzled cryptographers, historians, and linguists for centuries.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. Conversely,
B. For this reason,
C. Furthermore,
D. Meanwhile,

Transitions #2

Known by many as the “lungs of the Earth,” the Amazon plays a critical role in regulating the global climate by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. _____ deforestation in this region has accelerated, raising concerns about its impact on climate change and biodiversity.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. Nevertheless,
B. Consequently,
C. Before,
D. Similarly,

Transitions #3

Renowned physicist Albert Einstein revolutionized the field of theoretical physics with his theory of relativity, which fundamentally changed our understanding of space and time. _____ he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921 not for relativity, but for his explanation of the photoelectric effect.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. Furthermore,
B. For this reason,
C. Previously,
D. However,

Transitions #4

In recent years, many countries have experienced an increasing push for the decriminalization of all drugs. ____ some illicit drugs are known to be hazardous: fentanyl alone killed almost 9,000

Americans in 2022. Nevertheless, as decriminalization advocates point out, evidence suggests that focusing on harm reduction, prevention, and treatment programs would be far more effective in addressing drug addiction than relying solely on punitive measures.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. True,
B. Likewise,
C. Indeed,
D. As a result,

Transitions #5

The concept of the Dyson Sphere, a hypothetical megastructure that surrounds a star to capture its energy, was popularized by physicist Freeman Dyson. To construct a Dyson Sphere is far beyond our current technological capabilities and some doubt that it would ever be feasible, as the costs of maintenance would outweigh the gains. _____ it remains a staple of science fiction literature and discussions about extraterrestrial civilizations.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. Similarly,
B. Indeed,
C. Therefore,
D. Nevertheless,

Transitions #6

Although Jane Austen's novels were written almost two hundred years ago, they remain celebrated for their wit, character development, and keen social observations. _____ they have been adapted into numerous films and television series.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. On the other hand,
B. For instance,
C. Hence,
D. Subsequently,

Transitions #7

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches are renowned for their eloquence and powerful messages advocating for civil rights and social justice. _____ his "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered during the

1963 March on Washington, remains one of the most iconic and influential speeches in American history.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. True,
B. Likewise,
C. In addition,
D. In fact,

Transitions #8

Traditionally, women played vital roles in Mongol society. They were often responsible for managing household affairs and tending to livestock. _____, some women held positions of power and authority, serving as advisors to their husbands or sons in matters of governance and diplomacy. One notable example is Genghis Khan's daughter-in-law, Sorghaghtani Beki, who wielded considerable political influence and actively participated in shaping the empire's policies.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?
A. For example
B. Additionally
C. On the other hand
D. Therefore

Transitions Answers

1. B
2. A
3. D
4. A
5. D
6. C
7. D
8. B