Organizing and Transitioning Study Sheet

Goals of this Study Sheet

The organization is the skeletal outline of an essay, with the goal of giving your reader a road map that doesn’t leave them lost throughout your paper. In this study sheet, you will learn the basics of organization and see first-hand why it’s essential to building an essay. Additionally, transitioning enhances the flow of the essay, easing your reader along, preparing them for the next idea you want to talk about. You’ll learn the purpose of transitioning, basic transitional phrases, and transition placement in this study sheet.

Organization

Without organization, essays would be a scramble of words thrown on a page. Organization is necessary to a successful paper, and the typical layout goes as follows:

1. Introduction
This is where you introduce everything in your paper; open with an attention-grabber, give essential background knowledge, and lead towards your thesis.

2. Body Paragraphs
These paragraphs are the “meat” of your essay. Usually there are 3 of these paragraphs, but there can be more. Body paragraphs build directly off the ideas presented in your thesis -- body paragraphs are not put in a random order. Follow your thesis’ line of thought and organize accordingly.

3. Conclusion
Wrap up your ideas here. Typically, it’s good to start your conclusion by restating your thesis in a different way, then synthesize your ideas and bring it home.

Patterns of Organization

From the Writing Center
at the Academic Resource Center

John Tyler Community College
There are several patterns of organization at your disposal when it comes to writing an essay. A lot of the time, the pattern of organization you choose will affect your topic sentence -- the first sentence that introduces the main idea of the paragraph. Here are a few patterns of organization to think about when composing an essay:

- **Chronological** - This is when time is progressing in a certain direction. This might be good for a history paper, as you could talk about events in history that happened in an order of time.

- **Topical** - When you have a large topic you’re writing about, breaking them up into subtopics could be the way to go. For example, if you were writing an essay about different colleges, you could write each body paragraph about a specific university.

- **Spatial** - If you’re writing about an actual place or thing, spatial is a smart choice. This pattern allows you to compose paragraphs about different areas/sections of a place or thing, taking your reader from one area to the next.

- **Climactic** - If you like dangling the best part of your essay in front of your reader, this is a good choice. Essentially, the climactic pattern of organization is when your initial body paragraph has the least important information to your essay, and you build to the last body paragraph, which has the most important information.

**Transitioning**

Once your organization is solid, you can begin working on your transitions, which will ultimately increase the cohesion of your paper. Depending on what essay you’re writing, the types of transitions used may alter from paper to paper. Using the stereotypical college essay as reference, there are generally 2 ways to use transitions:
1. **Within a Paragraph** - If your ideas relate to one another enough to be in the same paragraph, you can use a transition (or transitional phrase) inside a body paragraph, as to convey the similarity between the evidence.

2. **Between Paragraphs** - Transitions between paragraphs can also be transitional phrases, but this where transition sentences are typically found. They are used to allow your paragraph to flow easily to the next paragraph, as well as highlight the connection between your ideas.

**Transitional Phrases**

There are several phrases that indicate a transition between information, and some are used in different situations:

**Showing Time**: Soon, Afterwards, Then, Later on, First (second, third), etc.

**Comparing**: In contrast, On the other hand, Conversely, Although, However, Nevertheless, etc.

**Giving an Example**: For instance, For example, To show, To illustrate, In this case, etc.

**To Refute/For an exception**: Despite, Sometimes, In this case, Once in a while, However, etc.

**To Clarify**: In other words, To clarify, To rephrase that, That is to say, etc.

**To Conclude**: Ultimately, In conclusion, To sum up, Altogether, All in all, In summary, etc.

**Sources Referenced**

Wells, Jacklyn M. “Lesson 2: Organizing the Essay.” *Welcome to the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL)*, owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/2/55/.
“Patterns of Organization for Essay Assignments.” Write.com,

“Transitional Words and Phrases.” The Writing Center,
writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Transitions.html.

“Transitions.” The Writing Center, UNC College of Arts & Sciences,
writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/transitions/.

Weber, Ryan, and Karl Stolley. “Transitional Devices.” Welcome to the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL),
owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/02/.