

Ivy League Mentors Presents



Transitions
Strategies & Practice

This guide is an excerpt from our textbook, *DSAT Reading & Writing: The Ultimate Guide*. If you found it helpful, you can purchase the full version here and use the promo code SAT25 at checkout for 25% off your purchase:

<https://ivyleaguementorsprep.com/sat/digital-sat-reading-writing-the-ultimate-guide/>

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.

Example: DNA can often be contaminated by environmental factors such as skin cells, dust, or bacterial residue. _____, forensic analysts must take extreme precautions to prevent false readings or compromised genetic evidence.

Because the second sentence is providing a logical result of the first sentence, an effect transition such as “therefore” should go in the blank.

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.

Example: The film *Inception* is often praised for its innovative narrative structure and mind-bending exploration of dreams within dreams. _____, it is admired for its striking visual effects.

Because the second sentence is presenting a new idea (a second reason why the film is praised), a continuation transition such as “in addition” should go in the blank.

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.

Example: To produce traditional Navajo rugs, Navajo weavers first shear and clean the wool from their sheep. _____, they hand-spin the fibers into yarn, dye them with natural pigments, and carefully weave intricate geometric patterns on a loom.

Because the second sentence is presenting a second step in the production process, a time and process transition such as “next” should go in the blank.

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.*

Example: In many cultures, guests wait to be served food by the host. _____, in Indonesia, it is customary for guests to serve themselves from communal dishes, often beginning with rice as the centerpiece of the meal.

Because the second sentence is presenting a contrasting idea (a difference between other cultures and Indonesia), a contrast transition such as “however” should go in the blank.

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.*

Example: In 1968, students in Paris used creative methods to express their frustration over government policies and societal conservatism. _____, they painted witty political slogans on city walls, staged street theater performances, and erected makeshift barricades to voice their discontent.

Because the second sentence is presenting an example (specific methods of protest), an illustration and emphasis transition such as “for instance” should go in the blank.

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.*

Example: Descartes believed that certainty in knowledge could only be achieved by doubting everything that could possibly be doubted. _____, he trusted only what was absolutely indubitable.

Because the second sentence simply restates the point in the first sentence, a conclusion and summarization transition such as “in other words” should go in the blank.

Note: 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 many other textbooks and non-official practice materials 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

Most mollusks (animals belonging to the phylum Mollusca) have a hard external shell for protection. However, not all mollusk species have this feature. Octopuses, _____ lack an external shell altogether.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) indeed,
- B) nevertheless,
- C) meanwhile,
- D) in addition,

Transitions #2

When painting landscapes, French artist Claude Monet typically emphasized loose brushwork and fleeting light effects. _____ for his series of paintings depicting the Rouen Cathedral, he focused instead on detailed studies of how the façade appeared under different lighting conditions; this approach resulted in unusually structured and repetitive compositions compared to his earlier work.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Nevertheless,
- B) Thus,
- C) Likewise,
- D) Moreover,

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 #9

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 #10

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 Answers

1. A

Choice A (indeed) is the correct answer because it emphasizes and reinforces the exception stated in the previous sentence: that not all mollusks have a hard external shell. The next sentence provides an example of such an exception, octopuses, which completely lack an external shell. The word indeed signals that this example supports and strengthens the prior claim. Choice B (nevertheless) incorrectly suggests a contrast, but there's no contradiction here—the example aligns with the previous point. Choice C (meanwhile) implies a shift in time or focus, which is unnecessary and less precise in this context. Choice D (in addition) would imply the addition of a new point or idea, but the information that follows is supporting the previous idea (that not all mollusks have hard external shells) rather than introducing a new point.

2. A

Choice A (Nevertheless) is correct because it signals a contrast between Monet's typical style—loose brushwork and fleeting impressions—and the more structured, methodical approach he used in his Rouen Cathedral series. The word highlights that this series was an exception to his usual practice. Choice B (Thus) implies a result or conclusion, which doesn't fit since the sentence is contrasting two different artistic approaches. Choice C (Likewise) suggests similarity, which would be misleading because the point is that Monet's cathedral series was different from his norm. Choice D (Moreover) adds additional information in support of the same idea, but this sentence shifts direction rather than continuing the same line of thought.

3. D

Choice D (However) is correct because it introduces a contrast between what readers might expect—that Einstein would win the Nobel Prize for his famous theory of relativity—and the surprising reality that he was honored instead for his work on the photoelectric effect. The word however highlights this unexpected twist. Choice A (Furthermore) suggests continuation or addition, which doesn't fit since the second sentence isn't reinforcing the first—it's contradicting an assumption. Choice B (For this reason) implies that the Nobel Prize was awarded because of relativity, which is the opposite of what the sentence says. Choice C (Previously) refers to time sequence, which isn't relevant to the logical relationship between the two ideas.

4. A

Choice A (True,) is correct because it acknowledges the valid concern about the trend presented in the previous sentence (dangers of some illicit drugs) before introducing the contrasting viewpoint of decriminalization advocates, which the rest of the text embraces. This transition sets up a balanced argument by affirming the fact while preparing for the counterpoint. Choice B (Likewise) suggests similarity or continuation, which doesn't fit since the second sentence contrasts concerns about hazards with alternative approaches. Choice C (Indeed) emphasizes or reinforces the previous idea, which would not make sense as the next sentence presents a different perspective, focusing on a concern about the trend of decriminalization. Choice D (As a result,) implies a consequence, which is illogical here because

the following statement expresses a concern about the trend discussed in the previous sentence, rather than a result of it.

5. D

Choice D (Nevertheless) is correct because it introduces a contrast between the technological and practical challenges of building a Dyson Sphere and its continuing presence as a popular idea in science fiction and discussions about extraterrestrial life. The word nevertheless signals that despite the doubts and difficulties, the concept remains influential. Choice A (Similarly) suggests a comparison or continuation of a similar idea, which doesn't fit here. Choice B (Indeed) emphasizes or reinforces the previous statement, which is not the case since the second sentence shifts focus to the concept's cultural impact. Choice C (Therefore) implies a conclusion or result based on the previous sentence, which is illogical given the contrasting nature of the idea.

6. C

Choice C (Hence) is correct because it shows a cause-and-effect relationship: Austen's novels are still celebrated, and as a result, they have been adapted many times into films and TV series. Hence clearly connects the ongoing popularity to these adaptations. Choice A (On the other hand) signals contrast, which doesn't fit here since the second sentence supports the first. Choice B (For instance) introduces an example, but the sentence presents a result rather than just an illustration. Choice D (Subsequently) indicates a sequence in time, which is incorrect, as there is no indication that the following sentence occurred at a later date in time.

7. D

Choice D (In fact,) is correct because it emphasizes and reinforces the significance of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech as a standout example of his impactful rhetoric. The phrase In fact, highlights the importance of this specific speech in support of the general statement. Choice A (True,) would suggest that the author is introducing a concession or counterpoint, which does not fit, as the following statement actually provides support for the idea expressed in the first sentence. Choice B (Likewise) suggests a similar example or parallel, which doesn't fit since the sentence isn't comparing but emphasizing. Choice C (In addition) can be eliminated because it would suggest that a new point is being added, when the following sentence is actually providing support and emphasis for the idea expressed in the previous sentence.

8. B

Choice B (Additionally) is correct because it adds information that builds on the previous idea about women's roles in Mongol society, expanding from household and livestock management to positions of power and political influence. Choice A (For example) introduces a specific illustration but the sentence that follows already provides the example of Sorghaghtani Beki later on, so it's not the best fit here. Choice C (On the other hand) signals contrast, which doesn't apply because the second sentence supports the same broad argument about how women held important roles in Mongol society, even though it mentions different specific roles. Choice D (Therefore) indicates a conclusion or result, which

does fit as the sentence is adding an additional sub-point rather than presenting a logical conclusion of what comes before.

9. B

Choice B (For this reason) is correct because it establishes a clear cause-and-effect relationship: since the Voynich Manuscript is written in an “indecipherable” script, which is the logical reason why it has puzzled cryptographers, historians, and linguists for centuries. Choice A (Conversely) suggests contrast, which doesn’t apply here. Choice C (Furthermore) indicates addition rather than causation. Choice D (Meanwhile) implies simultaneous events, which is irrelevant to the cause-and-effect relationship established by the sentences.

10. A

Choice A (Nevertheless) is correct because it introduces a contrast between the Amazon’s vital role in regulating the climate and the ongoing problem of deforestation, which threatens that role. The word nevertheless signals that despite its importance, there is a troubling development. Choice B (Consequently) implies cause and effect, which would mean deforestation is a result of the Amazon’s role, which doesn’t make sense here. Choice C (Before) indicates a time sequence, which is both irrelevant and misleading—the deforestation described in the following sentence is not occurring at a chronologically earlier time. Choice D (Similarly) suggests a comparison or similarity, which doesn’t fit the contrast between importance and threat.