

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 or that suggest an incorrect 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 previous tests fall into one of these categories.

Effect Transitions

These indicate that the author is presenting a result, consequence, or logical outcome. Common examples include *therefore*, *for this reason*, *as a result*, and *consequently*.

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 presents a logical result of the first sentence, an effect transition such as *therefore* should go in the blank.

Addition Transitions

These indicate that the author is presenting another related idea or a similar case. The new idea does not contradict the previous one, but it must add something new rather than merely provide evidence or a more specific explanation. Common examples include *in addition*, *moreover*, *furthermore*, *similarly*, and *likewise*.

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 presents an additional reason why the film is praised, an addition transition such as *in addition* should go in the blank.

Time & Process Transitions

These indicate that the author is indicating a shift in time or a step in a process. Common examples include *currently*, *increasingly*, *subsequently*, and *next*.

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 presents the next step in the process, a time and process transition such as *next* should go in the blank.

Contrast & Concession Transitions

These indicate that the author is presenting a difference, challenging an expectation, qualifying a previous claim, or acknowledging a point that complicates the discussion. Common examples include *however, nevertheless, by contrast, granted, admittedly, and true*.

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 presents a difference between customs in Indonesia and those in many other cultures, a contrast transition such as *by contrast* should go in the blank.

Support & Emphasis Transitions

These indicate that the author is reinforcing a previous idea with an example, supporting detail, specific explanation, confirmation, or stronger statement. Common examples include *for instance, specifically, indeed, and in fact*.

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 provides specific examples of the students' methods of protest, a support and emphasis transition such as *for instance* should go in the blank.

Restatement & Conclusion Transitions

These indicate that the author is expressing an idea in different words, summarizing several points, or presenting a final judgment or conclusion. Common examples include *in other words, that is, in sum, and ultimately*.

Example: The animal is nocturnal. _____, it is active mainly at night.

Because the second sentence restates the meaning of nocturnal in simpler words, a restatement 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.

Transition Categories Practice

For each text below, identify the most accurate relationship from the categories listed in the previous section. Then, provide one specific transitional word or phrase that you think would be appropriate in this situation.

1. In the early days of aviation, airplane travel was often dangerous and unpredictable. _____, many people were hesitant to fly or invest in the new technology.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

2. A team led by Japanese physicist Kenji Tanaka found that certain metals become superconductive at extremely low temperatures _____. Tanaka observed this effect in both mercury and lead under controlled laboratory conditions.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

3. A study conducted by Dr. Elena Marwick and published in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that curcumin, the active compound in turmeric, may help reduce inflammation and improve joint function in adults. _____, the researchers found evidence that curcumin may support cardiovascular health by helping to improve blood vessel function.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

4. In a hypothetical ecosystem, it is common for a dominant predator to control the population of a particular species, such as deer, in one generation. _____, changes in predator populations over time can disrupt this balance, leading to unexpected increases or declines in the prey species.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

5. To determine the age of a shipwreck using dendrochronology, researchers first extract small samples of wood from the vessel's timbers so that the growth rings can be carefully examined and recorded. _____, they compare the pattern of these rings to established tree-ring chronologies to identify the specific years in which the wood was formed.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

6. Some researchers have proposed that the subsurface ocean on Europa is sustained by tidal heating generated as the moon is flexed by the gravitational pull of Jupiter. _____, measurements of the moon's surface and magnetic field provide evidence consistent with the presence of a vast, salty ocean kept in a liquid state beneath its icy crust.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

7. Volcanoes are most commonly associated with regions along tectonic plate boundaries. _____, many people are surprised to learn that some volcanoes form in the middle of plates, far from these boundaries.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

8. The naked mole-rat is known for its remarkable resistance to cancer, a trait rarely observed in other mammals. _____, scientists have found that these animals produce a unique form of hyaluronan that helps prevent the uncontrolled cell growth typical of cancer.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

9. In the 20th century, smallpox was nearly eradicated due to a global vaccination campaign led by the World Health Organization. _____, the disease had killed millions of people worldwide and caused recurring devastating epidemics.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

10. Historians agree that Paul Revere did not single-handedly warn all the colonial militias of the arrival of the British. _____, he played a crucial role in alerting key patriot leaders in Lexington, helping to mobilize local forces and spread news of the advancing troops' movements.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

11. A notable aspect of Vivian Maier's work is her candid, unposed photography, much of which remained undiscovered until after her death. _____, her street photographs from 1950s Chicago frequently capture pedestrians mid-stride or in passing glances, preserving brief, intimate moments of urban life.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

12. Coil pottery, a traditional technique practiced by groups such as the Zulu people, involves shaping clay into long strands and stacking them to form vessels. One advantage of this method is that it allows potters to create a wide range of shapes and sizes simply by adding or adjusting the coils. _____, it doesn't require a pottery wheel, making it accessible in communities with limited tools.

Relationship:

Specific Transition:

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.

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 category and an example to illustrate how the transition can be used in context.

accordingly (effect)

- Annual rainfall fell sharply that year. Accordingly, the reservoir's water level dropped to a historic low.

actually (support & emphasis; contrast & concession)

- Blue whales are extraordinarily large. Actually, they are the largest animals known to have existed.
- Early observers classified the object as a planet. Actually, it was a comet.

additionally (addition)

- The new irrigation system conserves water. Additionally, it reduces the labor needed to maintain the fields.

admittedly (contrast & concession)

- The study produced promising results. Admittedly, its sample included only thirty participants.

after (time & process)

- The team collected samples from the cave walls. After, the researchers analyzed the samples in a laboratory.

afterward (time & process)

- Researchers exposed the bacteria to ultraviolet light. Afterward, they measured the bacteria's rate of growth.

again and again (time & process)

- The astronomer repeated the calculation using different measurements. Again and again, the same result appeared.

all the same (contrast & concession)

- The mountain route is steep and difficult. All the same, thousands of hikers complete it each year.

alternately (time & process; other)

- The two pumps did not operate together. Alternately, each pump ran for ten minutes while the other rested.
- The markings may represent numbers. Alternately, they may record the names of important individuals.

alternatively (other)

- Researchers could date the sample chemically. Alternatively, they could compare it with previously dated objects.

as a result (effect)

- Invasive insects damaged many of the region's trees. As a result, the forest canopy became much thinner.

as such (effect)

- The artifact is made from organic material. As such, it can be dated through radiocarbon analysis.

at any rate (other)

- Scholars disagree about the poem's exact date. At any rate, it was composed before the end of the fifteenth century.

basically (restatement & conclusion)

- The instrument detects tiny changes in air pressure. Basically, it functions as an extremely sensitive barometer.

besides (addition)

- The new method is inexpensive. Besides, it requires very little specialized equipment.

by comparison (contrast & concession)

- Venus has an extremely dense atmosphere. By comparison, Mercury has almost no atmosphere at all.

by contrast (contrast & concession)

- Most frogs lay their eggs in water. By contrast, some tree frogs deposit their eggs on leaves.

clearly (other)

- Three independent measurements produced nearly identical values. Clearly, the result was not caused by random error.

consequently (effect)

- The river deposited large amounts of sediment near its mouth. Consequently, a broad delta formed there.

conversely (contrast & concession)

- Increased rainfall can promote plant growth. Conversely, prolonged drought can sharply reduce it.

currently (time & process)

- The species once occupied much of the continent. Currently, it survives in only a few protected areas.

despite this (contrast & concession)

- The manuscript is missing several pages. Despite this, scholars have reconstructed most of its argument.

earlier (time & process)

- Scientists now believe that the fossils belonged to birds. Earlier, many researchers had classified them as small dinosaurs.

effectively (restatement & conclusion)

- The new law prohibited nearly all exports of the material. Effectively, it ended the international trade.

elsewhere (other)

- The northern caves contain paintings of large animals. Elsewhere, artists depicted human figures and geometric patterns.

essentially (restatement & conclusion)

- The agreement transferred control of the port to the neighboring country. Essentially, it redrew the national border.

eventually (time & process)

- The seeds remained dormant through several dry seasons. Eventually, heavy rainfall caused them to germinate.

finally (time & process)

- The research team made three unsuccessful attempts. Finally, it detected the signal during a fourth experiment.

first (time & process)

- Researchers followed several steps to analyze the mineral. First, they ground it into a fine powder.

first of all (time & process)

- The proposed explanation is doubtful for several reasons. First of all, it is inconsistent with the available geological evidence.

firstly (time & process)

- The new bridge offers two major advantages. Firstly, it shortens the distance between the two cities.

fittingly (other)

- The award recognizes achievements in marine conservation. Fittingly, it was presented beside a restored coastal wetland.

for example (support & emphasis)

- Some desert plants store water in their tissues. For example, a cactus can retain water in its thick stem.

for instance (support & emphasis)

- Several birds use tools to obtain food. For instance, some crows use sticks to remove insects from narrow openings.

for this reason (effect)

- The telescope must remain extremely cold to detect infrared radiation. For this reason, it is protected by a large sunshield.

furthermore (addition)

- The material is both light and durable. Furthermore, it can be produced at relatively low cost.

given this (effect)

- The island receives little rainfall and has no permanent rivers. Given this, residents must carefully manage their water supply.

granted (contrast & concession)

- The technique is faster than earlier methods. Granted, it is also somewhat less precise.

hence (effect)

- Each side of the crystal reflects light at a different angle. Hence, the crystal produces a range of visible colors.

however (contrast & concession)

- The animal resembles a wolf in appearance. However, genetic evidence places it in a different branch of the canine family.

in addition (addition)

- The expedition collected plant samples. In addition, it recorded the calls of several rare birds.

in any case (other)

- Researchers may never determine who created the sculpture. In any case, its artistic influence is well documented.

in comparison (contrast & concession)

- Tropical forests are humid and densely wooded. In comparison, savannas are drier and contain fewer trees.

in conclusion (restatement & conclusion)

- The evidence supports neither of the two traditional explanations. In conclusion, researchers must develop a new theory.

in contrast (contrast & concession)

- Copper conducts electricity efficiently. In contrast, rubber acts as an electrical insulator.

in effect (restatement & conclusion)

- The policy required businesses to obtain several costly permits. In effect, it prevented many small firms from entering the market.

in fact (support & emphasis)

- The region contains many active volcanoes. In fact, more than twenty have erupted during the past century.

in many cases (other)

- Some seeds can remain dormant for years. In many cases, they germinate only after exposure to fire.

in other words (restatement & conclusion)

- The species is endemic to the island. In other words, it occurs naturally nowhere else.

in particular (support & emphasis)

- Several metals respond strongly to magnetic fields. In particular, iron is easily magnetized.

in reality (contrast & concession)

- A turtle's shell appears to cover its skeleton like external armor. In reality, the shell is part of the skeleton itself.

in short (restatement & conclusion)

- The device is expensive, unreliable, and difficult to repair. In short, it is poorly suited for widespread use.

in so doing (effect)

- The city restored wetlands along the river. In so doing, it reduced flooding and created habitats for wildlife.

in sum (restatement & conclusion)

- The novel combines historical detail, complex characters, and vivid prose. In sum, it is an ambitious work of fiction.

in summary (restatement & conclusion)

- The experiment was carefully designed, and other researchers replicated its findings. In summary, the evidence supporting the hypothesis is strong.

in the first place (time & process)

- The proposed date is questionable for several reasons. In the first place, the pigment used in the painting did not exist at that time.

in the second place (time & process)

- The theory lacks direct evidence. In the second place, it fails to explain several important observations.

in turn (time & process)

- Warmer ocean water caused more ice to melt. In turn, the additional melting raised sea levels.

increasingly (time & process)

- Early archaeologists relied mainly on excavation. Increasingly, researchers use satellite images to locate buried structures.

indeed (support & emphasis)

- The cave is unusually difficult to reach. Indeed, researchers must descend through several narrow shafts to enter it.

instead (contrast & concession)

- Early astronomers believed that the Sun orbited Earth. Instead, Earth and the other planets orbit the Sun.

intermittently (time & process)

- The volcano remained mostly quiet for several months. Intermittently, small tremors shook the surrounding area.

lastly (time & process)

- The conservators cleaned the painting and repaired the damaged canvas. Lastly, they applied a protective coating.

later (time & process)

- The scientist first presented the theory in 1905. Later, she supported it with evidence from a series of experiments.

likewise (addition)

- Honeybees communicate the location of food through movement. Likewise, some ants use chemical trails to guide other members of their colonies.

meanwhile (time & process; contrast & concession)

- The probe traveled toward Mars. Meanwhile, engineers on Earth tested its landing equipment.
- Coastal cities experienced rapid population growth. Meanwhile, many inland towns lost residents.

more often (time & process)

- Some volcanic eruptions occur without warning. More often, they are preceded by earthquakes or changes in gas emissions.

moreover (addition)

- The new material is stronger than steel. Moreover, it weighs considerably less.

namely (support & emphasis)

- The study examined one major cause of coastal erosion. Namely, it investigated the effects of rising sea levels.

nevertheless (contrast & concession)

- The surviving records are incomplete. Nevertheless, historians have reconstructed the main events of the period.

next (time & process)

- Researchers first cleaned the fossil. Next, they photographed and measured it.

nonetheless (contrast & concession)

- The journey required several months of difficult travel. Nonetheless, the expedition reached its destination.

nowadays (time & process)

- Early maps were drawn entirely by hand. Nowadays, cartographers commonly rely on satellite data.

occasionally (time & process)

- Most of the geyser's eruptions are small. Occasionally, it sends water more than thirty meters into the air.

of course (support & emphasis; contrast & concession)

- support & emphasis: Sicily is famous for its volcanic landscape. Of course, Mount Etna is the island's best-known volcano.
- contrast & concession: The new method is fast. Of course, it is less precise than the traditional technique.

on the contrary (contrast & concession)

- The new evidence did not weaken the theory. On the contrary, it provided the theory's strongest support yet.

on the other hand (contrast & concession)

- Solar power produces little pollution during operation. On the other hand, its output varies with the amount of sunlight available.

originally (time & process)

- The building now serves as a museum. Originally, it was constructed as a railway station.

otherwise (effect; contrast & concession)

- The biological samples must remain frozen. Otherwise, the proteins within them will begin to degrade.
- The two manuscripts differ in spelling. Otherwise, their wording is nearly identical.

previously (time & process)

- Scientists now classify Pluto as a dwarf planet. Previously, it was considered the solar system's ninth planet.

rather (contrast & concession)

- The marks were not made by human tools. Rather, they were produced through natural erosion.

regardless (contrast & concession)

- The available evidence was limited. Regardless, the researchers published their preliminary findings.

second (time & process)

- The process requires two stages. Second, the heated material must be cooled rapidly.

second of all (time & process)

- The plan faces several obstacles. Second of all, the necessary equipment is not yet available.

secondly (time & process)

- The policy could affect farmers in two ways. Secondly, it could increase the cost of transporting their crops.

similarly (addition)

- Dolphins use whistles to communicate with members of their groups. Similarly, elephants use low-frequency calls to remain in contact over long distances.

soon (time & process)

- The first printing press arrived in the city in 1476. Soon, locally produced books became widely available.

specifically (support & emphasis)

- The law protects several types of habitat. Specifically, it covers wetlands, forests, and coastal grasslands.

still (contrast & concession)

- The experiment involved only a small number of participants. Still, its results provide a useful basis for further research.

subsequently (time & process)

- The manuscript was discovered in a private collection. Subsequently, it was donated to a public library.

surprisingly (other)

- The island lies within the Arctic Circle. Surprisingly, its coastal waters remain free of ice for much of the year.

that being said (contrast & concession)

- The technique has produced encouraging results. That being said, further testing is necessary before it can be widely adopted.

that is (restatement & conclusion)

- The animal is nocturnal. That is, it is active mainly during the night.

that said (contrast & concession)

- The model cannot predict every individual storm. That said, it accurately describes long-term climate patterns.

then (time & process; effect)

- time & process: Researchers first dissolved the mineral in acid. Then, they analyzed the resulting solution.
- effect: The measurements are accurate. Then, the earlier estimate must be incorrect.

there (other)

- The expedition reached a remote valley in northern Peru. There, researchers documented several previously unknown plant species.

therefore (effect)

- The two fossils have identical chemical signatures. Therefore, they probably formed in the same environment.

though (contrast & concession)

- The evidence is limited. The pattern is suggestive, though.

thus (effect)

- The mutation prevents the plant from producing chlorophyll. Thus, its leaves appear white rather than green.

to be exact (support & emphasis)

- The project will require more than one hundred turbines. To be exact, the plan calls for 116.

to conclude (restatement & conclusion)

- The policy reduced costs without lowering the quality of service. To conclude, it achieved its main objectives.

to that end (effect)

- The museum hoped to protect its most fragile documents. To that end, it installed a system that controls temperature and humidity.

today (time & process)

- The structure once served as a military fortress. Today, it is one of the country's most visited museums.

true (contrast & concession)

- The new process creates less waste. True, it is more expensive to install.

ultimately (time & process; restatement & conclusion)

- time & process: The painting passed through several private collections. Ultimately, it entered the national museum.
- restatement & conclusion: Several factors contributed to the empire's decline. Ultimately, no single cause can fully explain it.

what's more (addition)

- The new battery stores more energy than the earlier model. What's more, it can be recharged more quickly.

with this in mind (effect)

- The region is likely to experience longer periods of drought. With this in mind, officials are expanding its water-storage system.

Grammar in Transitions Questions

The transitional words and phrases in SAT transition questions are always grammatically identical. Specifically, they are always conjunctive adverbs (however, therefore, in fact, etc.). You will never see a coordinating conjunction (and, but, etc.) or a subordinating conjunction (although, because, etc.) appear among the answer choices in these questions.

Because the transitions are grammatically identical, you do not really need to think about grammar when answering these questions. After all, if the choices are grammatically identical, grammar will not be a determining factor in distinguishing between right and wrong answers.

However, it does help to understand how conjunctive adverbs can be used. The key point is that, although they most often appear at the beginning of a clause, most conjunctive adverbs can also be placed in the middle or at the end of a clause. Wherever they are placed, they still indicate the relationship between the clause in which they appear and the preceding clause.

All three of the following are grammatically correct and identical in meaning:

- From a biological perspective, bananas are actually berries because they develop from a single flower with one ovary and contain seeds within their flesh. However, from a culinary perspective, they are generally considered sweet fruits rather than berries.
- From a biological perspective, bananas are actually berries because they develop from a single flower with one ovary and contain seeds within their flesh. From a culinary perspective, however, they are generally considered sweet fruits rather than berries.
- From a biological perspective, bananas are actually berries because they develop from a single flower with one ovary and contain seeds within their flesh. From a culinary perspective, they are generally considered sweet fruits rather than berries, however.

Let's examine a question that uses this less common placement of the transitional word or phrase.

For decades, historians believed that the ancient city of Cahokia declined primarily because of a devastating flood. More recent geological evidence, _____, suggests that no major flood occurred during the period of the city's decline.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A. for example
- B. therefore
- C. however
- D. similarly

Although the blank appears in the middle of the second clause, we must still consider the relationship between that clause and the preceding sentence. The first sentence presents the traditional belief that a flood caused Cahokia's decline, while the second presents evidence that challenges that belief. This relationship is one of contrast, so Choice C is correct.

As seen in the previous examples, the placement of a conjunctive adverb within a clause is flexible and does not generally impact meaning. There is, however, one exception to this rule: *though*. Be warned that the following explanation is a bit dense and is unlikely to impact your score on the test, so feel free to ignore it. However, we decided to include it in this book because students sometimes ask about it.

As a conjunctive adverb, *though* tends to appear in the middle or at the end of a clause. When used at the beginning of a clause, however, *though* generally functions as a subordinating conjunction rather than a conjunction.

- Electric washing machines were developed in the early twentieth century. They did not, though, become common household appliances until the 1950s.
- Electric washing machines were developed in the early twentieth century. They did not become common household appliances until the 1950s, though.
- Though electric washing machines were developed in the early twentieth century, they did not become common household appliances until the 1950s.

These sentences may seem identical, and when it comes to meaning, they basically are. However, grammatically speaking, they are quite different. A conjunctive adverb is always non-essential and can be removed from a sentence without corrupting it grammatically. If we remove *though* from the first two examples, we are still left with grammatically correct sentences. Yet this is not the case with a subordinating conjunction. If we remove the *though* from the beginning of the final example, in which it functions as a subordinating conjunction, we are left with two independent clauses joined by a comma, a grammatical error known as a comma splice.

At any rate, you will not need to think about when solving Transitions Questions, because the transitional words and phrases that appear in these questions are all conjunctive adverbs. However, distinguishing between the parts of speech and understanding how these differences impact the grammar of sentences can be important in solving other types of questions on the SAT, especially ones related to punctuation.

Unconventional Transitions

Most transition questions use familiar words and phrases such as however, therefore, for example, or in addition. Occasionally, however, the answer choices will contain more specific, context-dependent transitions, such as challenging this hypothesis, responding to this criticism, filling this gap, etc.

Although these transitions may look less familiar, the thought process remains the same. You are still being tested on whether you understand the logical relationship between the information before the transition and the information after it. Instead of focusing only on whether the second sentence contrasts with, supports, or illustrates the first, you may also need to determine exactly what idea, explanation, hypothesis, or phenomenon is being supported, challenged, or addressed. Consider the example below:

Long thought to be a response to temperature, seasonal color changes in adult *Lepus americanus*, snowshoe hares that inhabit northern forests, have been observed to occur at slightly different times from year to year—a phenomenon that has been attributed to fluctuations in the timing of snowfall. _____ a research team found that adult *L. americanus* began changing coat color in response to shifting daylight patterns even when snow conditions remained unchanged, behavior consistent with photoperiod-driven molting.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A. Confirming this hypothesis,
- B. Undermining this explanation,
- C. Drawing a similar conclusion,
- D. Contrary to this phenomenon,

The first sentence discusses a phenomenon—the different timing of color changes—and introduces an explanation for that phenomenon: fluctuations in the timing of snowfall. The second introduces an experiment that found that the hares changed color in response to shifting daylight patterns even when snow conditions remained unchanged. Thus, the second sentence undermines the idea that the different timing of color changes can be attributed to fluctuations in the timing of snowfall. This corresponds closely with Choice B. Note that some students may be tempted to pick Choice D. However, we must consider what the second sentence is actually challenging. It is not challenging the phenomenon—that snowshoe hares change color at different times—but rather the explanation for that phenomenon: that the variation can be attributed to fluctuations in the timing of snowfall.

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 #11

Researchers Sarah Parcak, Thomas Levy, and Sarah H. Parcak report that while archaeologists may have traditionally relied on solitary fieldwork and small excavation teams, recent evidence points to a shift in the opposite direction. _____ archaeologists are choosing to collaborate across disciplines and institutions—a trend illustrated by a rise in large-scale archaeological projects involving specialists in fields such as remote sensing, geology, and environmental science.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Similarly,
- B) For this reason,
- C) Furthermore,
- D) Increasingly,

Transitions #12

In 1911, Wassily Kandinsky was living in what must have seemed like the ideal city for an ambitious painter: Munich. He was collaborating with avant-garde artists, experimenting with bold new ideas about abstraction, and helping to shape the direction of modern art. _____ Kandinsky felt increasingly drawn to return to his homeland of Russia, where he believed he could pursue his artistic vision more freely.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Still,
- B) Therefore,
- C) Indeed,
- D) Furthermore,

Transitions #13

The essays in James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* are often praised for their political urgency. _____ critic David Evans argues that they deserve more credit for their stylistic control, with Baldwin's shifts in tone, syntax, and pacing being just as carefully crafted as the arguments themselves.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A. In addition,
- B. Nevertheless,
- C. Instead,
- D. Specifically,

Transitions #14

The British Library's exhibit *Lines of Power: Mapping Empire and Territory* aims to show that cartography is never a purely neutral practice. _____ the maps on display do not merely record territory; they also reflect political priorities, commercial interests, and assumptions about whose knowledge counts.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A. That is,
- B. Meanwhile,
- C. Even so,
- D. For example,

Transitions #15

During the restoration of The Triumph of St. Cecilia, conservators Elena Marconi and Paolo Ricci removed layers of varnish and soot that had darkened the painted surface over centuries. _____, they discovered that what had long appeared to be a brown background was originally a vivid blue.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A. On the contrary,
- B. As a result,
- C. Similarly,
- D. Admittedly,

Transitions #16

Poet Amina Khalid often writes about migration in highly concrete terms, describing train stations, receipts, passports, and kitchen utensils. _____ these details are not incidental; they help Khalid show how large historical forces are experienced through ordinary objects and routines.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A. For instance,
- B. Conversely,
- C. Indeed,
- D. Otherwise,

Transitions Answers

Transition Categories Practice

Note: The specific transitions provided are just examples. Other answers may be possible.

1. Relationship: Effect

Specific Transition: Consequently,

Explanation: The reluctance to fly or invest is a result of aviation being dangerous and unpredictable.

2. Relationship: Support & Emphasis

Specific Transition: For example,

Explanation: The mercury and lead findings provide specific examples supporting the general claim about metals becoming superconductive.

3. Relationship: Addition

Specific Transition: In addition,

Explanation: The second sentence adds another possible health benefit of curcumin.

4. Relationship: Contrast & Concession

Specific Transition: However,

Explanation: The second sentence complicates the stable relationship described in the first by showing how that balance can change.

5. Relationship: Time & Process

Specific Transition: Next,

Explanation: The second sentence describes the next step in the dendrochronology process.

6. Relationship: Support & Emphasis

Specific Transition: Indeed,

Explanation: The measurements provide evidence supporting the proposed explanation for Europa's subsurface ocean.

7. Relationship: Effect

Specific Transition: Consequently,

Explanation: People are surprised that some volcanoes form far from plate boundaries because volcanoes are so strongly associated with plate boundaries.

8. Relationship: Support & Emphasis

Specific Transition: Indeed,

Explanation: The second sentence provides scientific evidence explaining and supporting the naked mole-rat's unusual cancer resistance.

9. Relationship: Time & Process

Specific Transition: Previously,

Explanation: The second sentence shifts backward in time to describe smallpox before its near eradication.

10. Relationship: Contrast & Concession

Specific Transition: Nevertheless,

Explanation: Although Revere did not warn everyone himself, the second sentence emphasizes that he still played an important role.

11. Relationship: Support & Emphasis

Specific Transition: For example,

Explanation: The Chicago photographs provide a specific example of Maier's candid, unposed style.

12. Relationship: Addition

Specific Transition: Moreover,

Explanation: The second sentence adds another advantage of coil pottery to the one already given.

Transitions Practice

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 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 implies cause and effect, which would mean deforestation is a result of the Amazon’s role, which doesn’t make sense here. Choice C 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 suggests a comparison or similarity, which doesn’t fit the contrast between importance and threat.

11. D

Choice D is correct because it indicates a growing trend. The first sentence explains that archaeology has historically involved solitary fieldwork or small teams, but that recent evidence shows a shift in the

opposite direction. The word increasingly clarifies that more and more archaeologists are choosing to collaborate across disciplines and institutions, reinforcing the idea of a developing change in practice. Choice A suggests a similarity between ideas, but the passage is describing a shift away from past practices rather than a parallel situation. Choice B indicates cause and effect, which would suggest that the earlier description directly causes archaeologists to collaborate, a relationship the text does not establish. Choice C signals an addition of similar information, but the second sentence is not simply adding another fact—it is specifying the growing trend introduced in the previous sentence.

12. A

Choice A is correct because it introduces a contrast between Wassily Kandinsky's seemingly ideal life as an artist in Munich and his desire to return to Russia. The word still signals that despite the favorable circumstances described in the first sentence, Kandinsky nevertheless wanted to leave. Choice B implies cause and effect, which would suggest that living in Munich caused Kandinsky to want to return to Russia, a relationship the text does not establish. Choice C emphasizes confirmation or emphasis, which would suggest the second sentence reinforces the idea that Munich was ideal, rather than introducing a contrasting desire to leave. Choice D suggests an addition of similar information, which doesn't fit the shift from describing a positive situation to revealing a conflicting desire.

13. B

Choice B is the best answer. "Nevertheless" logically signals that the information in the second sentence contrasts with the emphasis in the first sentence. The first sentence explains that *Notes of a Native Son* is often praised for its political urgency, while the second sentence indicates that critic David Evans thinks the essays deserve more recognition for a different quality: their stylistic control. Thus, "nevertheless" appropriately marks the shift from the usual focus on the essays to Evans's differing emphasis. Choice A is incorrect because "in addition" illogically signals that Evans's point merely adds another similar point to the first sentence. Instead, the second sentence contrasts Evans's view with the more common critical emphasis described in the first sentence. Choice C is incorrect because "instead" illogically signals that Evans's point fully replaces the previous claim about the essays' political urgency. Instead, the second sentence suggests a difference in emphasis, not a total rejection of the first point. Choice D is incorrect because "specifically" illogically signals that the second sentence provides specific details elaborating on the essays' political urgency. Instead, it introduces a distinct critical focus: the essays' stylistic control.

14. A

Choice A is the best answer. "That is" logically signals that the second sentence clarifies the first sentence's claim that cartography is never a purely neutral practice. The second sentence explains what that claim means by specifying that maps reflect political, commercial, and cultural assumptions rather than simply recording territory. Choice B is incorrect because "meanwhile" illogically signals that the second sentence presents information occurring at the same time as, but separate from, the claim about cartography in the first sentence. Instead, the second sentence explains that claim. Choice C is incorrect because "even so" illogically signals that the second sentence contrasts with or qualifies the first sentence's point. Instead, the second sentence clarifies it. Choice D is incorrect because "for example"

illogically signals that the second sentence provides just one example supporting the first sentence's claim. Instead, the sentence directly explains the meaning of the claim itself.

15. B

Choice B is the best answer. "As a result" logically signals that the discovery described in the second sentence followed from the restoration work described in the first sentence. Because the conservators removed layers of varnish and soot, they were able to see the painting's original blue background. Choice A is incorrect because "on the contrary" illogically signals that the second sentence contradicts the first sentence. Instead, it describes a result of the restoration. Choice C is incorrect because "similarly" illogically signals that the second sentence presents information similar to the first sentence. Instead, it presents an outcome of the restoration process. Choice D is incorrect because "admittedly" illogically signals that the second sentence is a concession or qualification to the first sentence. Instead, it describes what the conservators discovered because of their work.

16. C

Choice C is the best answer. "Indeed" logically signals that the second sentence emphasizes and deepens the point made in the first sentence. The first sentence notes Khalid's use of concrete details, and the second explains the significance of those details by showing how they help express the lived experience of migration. Choice A is incorrect because "for instance" illogically signals that the second sentence provides a specific example of the concrete terms mentioned in the first sentence. Instead, it explains the importance of those details in Khalid's poetry. Choice B is incorrect because "conversely" illogically signals that the second sentence contrasts with the first sentence. Instead, it reinforces and elaborates on it. Choice D is incorrect because "otherwise" illogically signals that the second sentence describes what would happen if the first sentence were not true. Instead, the second sentence explains why Khalid's use of concrete details matters.