

## Sentence continuity and paragraph transitions in action:

If words are the atoms of our writing then sentences are the molecules. Like molecules, they must be strung together to form the body of a paragraph. The question then is, how do we connect our sentences to compose a coherent paragraph? The answer is that we must write with good sentence continuity. Sentence continuity is the 'molecular glue' for our written ideas. When we write with good sentence continuity we actually repeat a lot of what we've already written so that our reader stays on topic. We refer to subjects we've already discussed by using key words such as pronouns that refer back to the subjects of previous sentences. When we are not doing that, we may use transitional phrases such as "consequently" to connect our ideas. Consequently, by doing all of these things, our sentences read with what we call good flow, even when all they may be doing is listing a bunch of things that we should do to achieve good sentence continuity.

Although the judicious use of repetition, key words, and transitions works well to link sentences, it works even better to link paragraphs. Transitional phrases are especially good at this. For instance, we could have used another familiar transitional phrase to write the first sentence of this paragraph as "Not only does the use of repetition, key words, and transitions work well to connect sentences within a paragraph, but it also works well to connect paragraphs within an essay." After all, we may use the same gluey tool kit for both tasks. However, there is a difference. While these tools can be used to connect sentences within a paragraph, when connecting paragraphs within an essay they must actually do two things: they must refer back to the topic of the previous paragraph, and then they must shift the reader's attention to the new topic of the present paragraph. Thus, perhaps it is best to think of paragraph transitions not so much as bits of molecular glue but rather as big joints within the body of an argument. They are built of the same wordy material, but they do much bigger jobs.