# Organization & Transitions

Author AA Milne, creator of the popular character Winnie the Pooh, once said that "Organization is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it's not all mixed up." Organizing your ideas and moving logically and clearly from one point to the next is one of the hallmarks of an advanced language speaker.

### Objectives

1. Recall the main three aspects of recognizing organization
2. Identify the purpose of different transition words and phrases
3. Use organizing strategy to prepare a speech
4. Use transition words and phrases to effectively orient the listener

## What is Organization?

As discussed in the lesson [Listening Strategy: Recognize Organizational Patterns](https://edtechbooks.org/advanced_mid_listening__speaking/recognize_organizational_patterns), there are three important considerations for predicting the organization of spoken English: Purpose, Topic, and Audience. Just as these three points can help you listen for important information and prepare for what the speaker will say next, you can use these features to follow patterns for your own speaking. Following an expected pattern allows the listener to use their energy to focus on your message rather than your use of language. Think of the difference between the experience of hiking on a well-marked trail vs true wilderness. Following a trail allows the hikers to focus on the beauty of the surrounding nature more fully than if they have to constantly make decisions about the safest and most direct way to arrive at their destination.

The purpose will help you identify what type of information you want to include. Do you need to explain a sequence of events? Do you have reasons and examples to support your claim? Or do you need to consider what would be the most entertaining information for your listener?

The topic will naturally help you narrow down the details you will include to support your purpose. How detailed does the sequence need to be? Is this information that needs to be explained in painstaking detail? Or would a brief explanation be sufficient for your purpose?

The audience will help focus your speaking even more. What type of vocabulary are you able to use with this specific set of listeners? What is the expectation for turn-taking during this conversation? Does the person have a good understanding of the topic? Does the listener have a different opinion on the points?

After identifying your purpose, topic, and audience, you should have a clear idea of the content you need to include in your speaking. What is your main idea? What are the supporting details and examples you need to include? What order makes the most sense for presenting those ideas?

For example, some speakers choose to begin by telling a specific story (example). They then explain the concepts illustrated in that story. By beginning with something specific and personal, they get the attention of the listener so that the more abstract concepts are easier to understand.

In other situations, a speaker might begin with a definition or a clearly stated thesis statement. Depending on the audience, they may then transition into highly specific and new information about that topic, or they may give a general overview of the ideas.

At every step, the speaker should be thinking about what the listener needs to hear next. Does the listener look confused? Maybe another example is needed before you continue. Does the listener have a limited amount of time? Perhaps the important details need to be shortened. Does the listener need more context? And so on.

Presenting the content in a simple, logical way according to the needs of the listener is the most basic and necessary step for organization. Adding transitions can help, but the content should be easy to follow from one point to the next even without the help of transitions.

### Exercise 1: Listen

This explanation has been very general up to this point. Let's listen to an example of Robin Wall Kimmerer, a Professor of Environmental Science and Forestry. She combines her formal scientific education with the traditional knowledge and practices of her Native American tribe (the Potawatomi Nation).

As you listen, think about what her purpose, topic, and audience would be:

Questions

1. What is her main purpose?
2. What is the topic of this video?
3. Who is she talking to in the video?

Answer Key

1. What is her main purpose?
   * Her purpose is to explain a traditional belief of her Native American tribe called Honorable Harvest. The video is organized into steps and tenants of practice. There also seems to be a secondary purpose of persuading her audience to be more aware of their role in conservation. This is most evident in the introduction and conclusion.
2. What is the topic of this video?
   * The topic of the video is environmental conversation as understood through the teachings of the Potawatomi people.
3. Who is she talking to in the video?
   * She is talking to an audience that is not a part of her tribe and therefore unfamiliar with the traditions. It seems likely she is speaking to an American audience based on her examples. Based on the steps and examples she gives, it would be reasonable to assume that the people in her primary audience would be those already familiar with conservation and willing to make changes to their behavior. She is not giving a general basic introduction to what conservation is, but she does use imagery and emotional language to connect rather than quoting research to explain or prove her point.

Speaking Practice

* Robin W. Kimmerer explains the traditions she was raised with in these videos. Consider your own cultural traditions about the world and the environment. What were you taught about the role of humans in caring for the world?
* Think about a time when you visited a place in nature and felt connected to that place. Where did you visit? What was unique about this place? What do you think caused you to feel connected to that natural place?
* Try summarizing the information in this video. Your purpose is to explain the main ideas and major details. Your topic is the Honorable Harvest. Your audience is a family member or friend who has a garden but is not familiar with conservation.

## How do I transition between ideas?

Let's return to the comparison of organized speech to hiking on a trail. Many trails are clear and easy to follow exactly as they are because visually they are very obvious to the hiker. However, the added presence of trail markers such as signs, fences, or cairns (stacks of rocks) can make it even easier for the hikers to stay on the correct path. This is similar to how content itself can often be sufficiently organized without additional signs to the listener, but the presence of verbal signposts can make it even easier for the audience to understand what the speaker wants to communicate.

Some transitions are very basic. The presence of connecting words such as **for, and, nor, but, or, yet (also known as FANBOYS)** are used frequently in English to create a relationship between ideas. Without much thought or effort, a speaker can include these to help move smoothly from one point to the next.

Some transitions are grammatically based. The use of time clauses, for example, can establish a chronological relationship between two ideas. In fact, the main purpose for including grammatical instruction on these clause structures during this semester is so that you begin to naturally incorporate these transitions/connections in your speaking.

Additionally, there are some transition words and phrases that are specifically used to indicate a specific organizational pattern. Click through the tabs below to see words and phrases often used for the different speaking purposes.

### Adding or showing agreement/similarity

* Not only... but also...
* In addition
* First, second, third
* In the same way
* Not to mention
* By the same token
* Also/Like/And/As/Too/Another
* As well as
* Of course
* Likewise
* Similarly
* Additionally
* Furthermore

### Examples and Support

* In other words
* Such as
* Like
* In fact
* For example
* For instance
* To demonstrate
* To illustrate
* To clarify

### Opposing or showing a limitation/contradiction

* Although this may be true
* In contrast
* On the other hand
* On the contrary
* At the same time
* Even though
* But/Still/Yet/Or
* Although
* Whereas
* However
* Rather
* Nevertheless

### Cause or Purpose & Effects or Consequences

* In the even that
* In order to
* Because of
* Provided that
* In the hope that
* Given that
* So that
* Owing to
* Due to
* If... then
* As a result
* For this reason
* In effect
* Thus
* Then
* Consequently
* Therefore

### Time and Sequence

* To begin with
* As soon as
* In the meantime
* In the first place
* First, second, third
* after, later, then, before
* since, until, when, while, now
* Eventually
* During
* Next
* Once

### Conclusion and Summary

* After all
* As can be seen
* In summary
* In conclusion
* In short
* In brief
* To summarize
* Overall
* Ultimately
* On the whole

Different purposes and content will use different combinations of transition words or phrases. For example, a comedian who is performing will likely use a combination of time transitions to explain a situation and interesting adverbs (such as surprisingly or suddenly) to create a sense of story.

A marketing team may use opposing words to talk negatively about a competing product and addition and cause effect words and phrases to emphasize the unique value their own product can provide.

### Exercise 2: Listen

Listen to the video again and then look at the transcript below to see how she uses transitions to express ideas about conservation.

Transcript - Transitions Marked

**One of the first steps**

of the Honorable Harvest is to

understand that the lives that we are

taking are the lives of generous beings,

of sovereign beings.

**Andin order to**

accept their gift, we owe them at least

our attention.

**And**

**yet**, the average American can name over a

hundred corporate logos and ten plants.

The protocols for

the Honorable Harvest are not really

written down, **but** if they were, it would

look something like this.

**And then** if we

encounter another plant, we ask

permission.

I know

there are places where if you talk to a

plant, they think you were crazy, **but** in

our way it's just good manners.

**For** we remember that they don't

belong to us, and taking without

permission is also known as stealing.

**And**

the honorable harvest councils that we

**also** take in such a way that does the

least harm, and in a way that benefits

the growth of the plant.

**The next**

**tenant** of the honorable harvest is to

share it with others: human and non.

The

earth has shared generously with us, **so**

we have to model that behavior in return.

Plant gatherers often leave a spiritual gift behind, **but** it can also be a material gift: weeding, caretaking, spreading seeds, helping those plants to flourish.

**And** the water that you drink, whether you're in an urban setting, whether you're on a remote mountaintop, we still are recipients of those gifts.

**And if** we take the time to be grateful that brings us into that state of humility of understanding that we are not at the top of a biological hierarchy that in fact we are the younger brothers of creation

Transcript - If Clauses Review

**If I could choose just a single element**

of the traditional teachings that we're

called to pick up, **it would be** the

teachings of the Honorable Harvest, which

were taught us by the plants who give us

everything that we need.

The protocols for

the Honorable Harvest are not really

written down, but **if they were**, **it would**

**look** something like this.

And then **if we**

**encounter** another plant, **we ask**

permission.

**If**

**you're going to take** a life, **you have to**

**be** personally accountable for it.

I know

there are places where **if you talk** to a

plant, **they think** you were crazy, but in

our way it's just good manners.

**If you're**

**going to ask**, **you have to listen** for the

answer.

And **if the answer is** no, **you go**

home.

And **if we take** the time to

be grateful **that brings** us into that

state of humility of understanding that

we are not at the top of a biological

hierarchy that in fact we are the

younger brothers of creation

### Exercise 3: In-Class Activity

When you are speaking in your native language, you make adjustments to your speaking organization based on PURPOSE, TOPIC, and AUDIENCE without really thinking. You will naturally apply the same patterns in English. We are practicing organizing ideas because it helps us to more quickly think of the language that supports what we want to do naturally.

Your Purpose and Topic

**STEP ONE:** Write the three main purposes for speaking. Then think about what topic related to the environment you would talk about with that purpose.

Examples:

Persuading someone to make a environmentally conscious change to a process or product

Explaining how recycling works in your community

Entertaining someone with a story of why the environment is important to you

Your Audience

**STEP TWO:** Look at your list of situations. Think about your audience in those situations. Identify these things for each situation:

* How many people are involved?
* What is the relationship between the people? (formal or informal)
* How much shared knowledge is there?How much information is actually needed to achieve the purpose?
* Is the speaking in a conversation or more like a presentation?
* If it is a conversation, what is the turn-taking pattern? Is it short ideas from each person? Can you interrupt or give non-verbal cues?

Again, these are things you do not usually have to think about carefully when speaking in your first language. Thinking about them for speaking English helps you notice cultural differences and organize your ideas appropriately.

Your Outline

**STEP THREE:** Make a simple outline for that specific speaking situation.

Example:

Explaining how recycling works in your community to a group of children. It needs to be a little entertaining to keep their attention. This would be an informal situation, the children know there are different cans for garbage, but that is their only context for recycling. It will be a presentation, but I will likely be interrupted because they are children.

Outline: I am invited to an elementary school classroom to talk about recycling.

Introduction: ask if they know the difference between the two garbage cans, explain what happens when we normally throw garbage away

Needed details: use a specific example of how paper can be recycled (common everyday object), what can we recycle in our community,

Conclusion: explain how we can use less if we recycle, give them some specific examples of why that would be important in the world

You can see that this is not a complete transcript of what the speakers would say, but the speaker has thought about the essential information. The audience and purpose of the speaking context shows us that the story is important, but it is equally (if not more) important to show the qualities of the person in the story. The speaker understands that the interviewer wants to know more than the simple details of the story, the interviewer wants to understand the person as a possible employee.

Practice

**STEP FOUR:** Now that you have your outline, you will need to practice. This week, practice recording yourself speaking using that outline. Listen to your recording and make changes to your organization to match it to the purpose, topic, and audience better. You can ask people to listen to your recording and give advice.

**STEP FIVE:**Your teacher will ask you to submit the recording as part of an assignment.

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