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Skill 1 – Seeing, recognizing, and using different transitional (connective) words in a story.

Skill 2 - Choosing a transitional word or phrase that fits with a story idea and that guides the story in the direction desired.

Skill 3 - Choosing appropriate transitional (connective) words to smoothly connect paragraphs.

Skill 4 – Avoiding the placement of the “whole story” into the first paragraph by learning to carry on an opening story idea into the second paragraph **with a transitional word group**.

Skill 5 - Changing a story by altering its descriptive words.

Skill 6 – Recognizing where descriptive words can be found in a sentence.

Skill 7 – Using a thesaurus to accomplish the following:

a) find just the right verbs and synonyms

b) increase one’s vocabulary

c) substitute a word to change the sentence meaning

Dear Parents and Teachers,

The direction of a story can be controlled by the transitional (connective) words a student chooses to begin his/her paragraphs. Likewise, a student can alter the plot, background, or mood of a story in the first paragraph simply by choosing a better verb or by altering a descriptive expression. Indeed, with the correct training and encouragement, students can have fun learning to manipulate words.

To help your students along that path, this resource provides 20 Story Starters followed by three choices of transitional word phrases to begin their second paragraph. By seeing and using transitional words, your students will:

1. gain confidence in recognizing and using transitional words and
2. gain discretion in choosing those transitional word phrases that will smoothly connect their paragraphs.

In addition, we have targeted certain key words (adjectives and adverbs) by printing them in color. By using a thesaurus to replace these key words with alternate words, students can change the story’s plot or mood. In addition, by using a thesaurus, students can also change an underlined verb. If you prefer to work solely with familiarizing your students with transitional (connective) words, ignore all the key words, and just have your students pick a connective word group to begin their second paragraph.

The more opportunities students receive to see and to choose appropriate transitional words, the more natural it will be for them to use transitional words in their future scripts.

**How Can You Recognize the Key Words?**

1. Some of the adjectives are printed in **blue**.
2. Some of the adverbs are printed in **red**.
3. Some of the verbs are underlined.

Let the Creations Begin!

**STORY STARTER 1**

**There was once a caring, patient mother who gave birth to three sons.  The oldest son was a sociable fellow, but he clung to the horrible habit of clicking his tongue absentmindedly.  The middle son was a bright boy, but he practiced the creepy habit of collecting insects and storing them inside his dresser drawers. The youngest son was a tidy, little tot, but he possessed an eagerness to run his fingers through his wavy hair whenever he was talking with someone important.  During every waking moment, this patient mother tried to ignore the unusual habits of her three sons.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**In fact, To be sure, Fortunately,**

**STORY STARTER 2**

**Billy Bob Bodine had just returned from trudging across the top of Hickory Creek Bank where he’d been hunting frogs and tadpoles. Short and pudgy, with his hair looking like it hadn't been groomed in over a week, Billy carried his favorite shiny, slimy, frog whose spotted head constantly peered out of the opening in a leather case that hung low from Billy’s belt. I remember him clearly on that Indian Summer day as he sang over and over again that same unforgettable tune in his raspy voice, singing it loud enough for most everyone within ear shot to hear:**

**“Hands are dirty and sometimes grimy,**

**Cause creepy crawlers can be slimy;**

**But watchful eyes and listening ears**

**Can ward off croaking froggy fears.”**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Around the time… Indeed, Not surprisingly,**

**STORY STARTER 3**

**Heather was bored to tears stuck at home all weekend playing video games with her brother, Josh. Most of the time, she was plopped in front a screen where she found herself either hiding in a cave, falling off a cliff, or fleeing giant bugs, speeding bullets, or killer bats. Of course, her day reached bottom when Josh mercilessly mocked her because she forgot her game password. Heather would much rather have been planning a sleepover with some of her girlfriends or been arranging an afternoon, dance-off party with her cousin, Sheila. However, Heather lived in the country, and the recent winter weather and snow-covered roads had ended any traveling hopes she held.**

**“Brothers can be so boring,” thought Heather, “because they certainly have no imagination when it comes to having fun.”**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**What’s more… If it had not been for… Despite …**

**STORY STARTER 4**

**Jarrod was a very silent boy. Every afternoon after school he hung inside the local drugstore reading car magazines with his cell phone set to silent mode. All evening he passionately read a comic book about one of his super heroes while sipping on cold, grapefruit juice from his mother’s refrigerator. Most of the time, he would remain quiet, and he would only look up if he sensed panic or fear from the person speaking. He did, after all, deeply care about the well-being of others, but that did not change the miserable fact that he just wanted to be left alone.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Because he… Above all, This is why…**

**STORY STARTER 5**

**When shy Kara Keystone was sent off to Orange County to live with her older sister, everybody said she was the most unlikely girl to find contentment so far from her Iowa hometown; but those predictions soon proved to be flawed. Kara made friends faster than a Splash Mountain log boat speeding down its trough into the waiting waters below. Tan, blonde, and bubbling over with personality, Kara effortlessly dove into one social circle after another. After swiftly befriending over 30 new contacts on Facebook during her first week in Santa Ana, Kara soon found herself with steady invitations to the most fashionable events. At last, she had become one of the “popular” kids. However, Kara soon discovered that being popular did not bring everything she’d hoped for.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Gradually, Moreover, More times than not …**

**STORY STARTER 6**

**The squeaky, hinged, doggie screen that was built into the back kitchen door opened up into a small, square, wire-mesh dog run. That dog run was Sparky’s sole escape to the outside world. When he was not shut inside his dog run, he was endlessly trapped inside his master’s house. For weeks at a time, Sparky lived in that one-room cabin with four, paneled walls, a corroded cook stove, two beat- up cupboards, and a tiny, stained-glassed window located just above the kitchen sink. If not for the constant water that dripped from the leaky faucet, Sparky’s ears would have heard no noises at all – well, except for the sound of his own, quick, shallow breaths inhaled through his open mouth, often with his tongue sticking out. Sadly, Sparky believed it was doubtful that his dull life would ever change because, according to his master, he was just a dumb, dispensable, dirty dog.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**In the past, Unquestionably… In spite of…**

**STORY STARTER 7**

**It was an early October evening, barely past my dinnertime. I had just devoured the best apple pie my grandmother had ever baked. The leaves on the trees brightly shimmered with reds and yellows. There had been a brisk wind all afternoon, but now the wind had died; it was dead calm. I was nonchalantly resting on the front, wooden steps of my grandparent’s farmhouse when I heard it – that distinguishable, raspy voice that belonged to my long-lost cousin, Jed Remains. Now I ask you, what kind of last name is “Remains”? The only thing that remains about him are the ghastly memories I endure each time I keenly recall that hot, humid afternoon when he and his conniving brothers viciously lowered me into that deep well on the far south side of my Uncle’s farm. Let’s see, how many hours was I down there?**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**In times past, If not for… Promptly,**

**STORY STARTER 8**

**Henry grew up with his five brothers and sisters, furry raccoons just like Henry. Well, they were almost like Henry. They all had facial masks like Henry, and they were all born in the deep, green forest like Henry and they all had gray coats and loved their vegetables just like Henry. However, all five of Henry’s siblings were naturally brainy, and, regrettably, Henry was not. You see, one of the marks of a valuable raccoon is to be highly intelligent, and Henry just never made the grade. For example, one foolish habit of Henry’s that immensely irritated the rest of his family was his reckless habit of leaving behind a trail of scent that could easily be picked up by the hunters. Of course, wherever the hunters tracked Henry also led them to his raccoon family; and leading the enemy straight to your family – well – that’s not cool!**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Certainly, Utterly ashamed, For that reason,**

**STORY STARTER 9**

**It was dark. It was ominous. The continuous thunderclaps sounded like several hundred large, thin sheets of metal being violently shaken all at once. Olivia, standing at the top of the stairs, was about to make a frantic dash back into her bedroom when, suddenly, the front door creaked on its hinges, heavy footsteps stomped along the wooden entryway floor, and two human shadows passed through the family room. One of the human shadows clumsily tossed a sealed envelope into the dusty corner across from Grandfather’s study. Without delay, both shadows disappeared out the back door and into the wet, night air. Olivia bravely crept down the stairs, grabbed the envelope, returned to her room, and opened the sealed flap. Her face registered disbelief when she read the message scribbled faintly in brown crayon across the page:**

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**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Hastily, With great care, Stunned,**

**STORY STARTER 10**

**In the valley that lies just below a small town called Oatmeal, there stood a rugged, old, tattered cabin that sheltered one of the calmest men you could ever imagine. In all of Oatmeal, this man was known as The Storyteller. To be sure, The Storyteller was a man of some importance in most sections of Oatmeal; he was an amiable, skinny man who could spin just about any kind of a story. No story was beyond his mind’s grasp. He conjured up monstrous, horrid narratives of giant bugs or dainty, magical stories of pink, frilly ladies. He thought up tales of famous, snobby tycoons, or precious legends of hardy, heroic little boys. However, his final writings were about himself. You see, once upon a time, The Storyteller was a bad-tempered, chubby-cheeked boy who incessantly craved chocolate-chip ice cream cones.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Without a doubt… Of course, By far,**

**STORY STARTER 11**

**Even before he was flung from his mountain bicycle, Tom was having a bad day. That morning, he rolled out of bed to discover that both his sister and his dog were missing. Then, strangely, there was that girl he sped by on his way to the school library. She had gazed at him so oddly, like she knew him. Now, he found himself pathetically sprawled out on a cold, cement floor inside a gigantic warehouse. Slowly, about five feet in front of him, a massive, metal door squeaked open; what he saw was startling! His eyes focused upon a flash of light that illuminated two, tall, glowing figures with green eyes, wearing silver coveralls and massive, red helmets. Tom searched around for his bike; it was gone. He thought to himself, “If only I could remember how I got here!” Tom was scared, really scared!**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Oddly… Shaking violently, Earlier,**

**STORY STARTER 12**

**After thinking it all over, Jo Ellen knew the whole incident had been her fault, and so did everyone else, including Mr. Clark. Mr. Clark was the first teacher to ever really believe in Jo Ellen, and now she’d blown even his trust. There wasn’t a day during the school break that she hadn’t gravely wished she’d never met Jessica. Why didn’t she just shut her big, blue eyes to Jessica’s devious plans? Now, Mr. Clark would be relentlessly waiting for her to explain everything. She knew she needed to tell him the truth, but that would mean revealing her best friend’s secret. Then again, why shouldn’t she tell him about Jessica’s pranks? After all, Jessica was a very annoying girl who talked down to everyone and treated all of her friends with the utmost cruelty.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Looking back… In contrast, Too many times,**

**STORY STARTER 13**

**The recent event at Tallywood horrified Deanka. All of her forest friends had encountered the same changes: they coughed nonstop, their fingers had turned orange and their eyes had developed supersite. However, when countless numbers had vanished in midair– well – Deanka began to question how one beam of light could so much to so many. The fact that she and her sister had not been affected by the bright beam was mind-boggling. So, in spite of her present safety, Deanka now crouched onto a nearby tree stump and scribbled down her native language. Without delay, a carved warning must be deeply etched into the channel of tree stumps that made up the Tallywood Forest Mailing Trail. Panic-stricken, Deanka frantically reasoned, “Strange intruders must have invaded from the sky, and we need to alert the rest of the forest!”**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Meanwhile… Until now, At the same time,**

**STORY STARTER 14**

**At last, time travel machines were being considered by the scientific engineers of the world. After all, this was the year 2030, so it was about time that the global benefits of time travel would finally be contemplated. Time travel had always fascinated Shannon Marie, but it was her grandfather’s tales back in 2017 that had prompted her to spend a lifetime pondering the possibility of time travel. Those startling tales told of a small, red, tattered notebook her grandfather had buried behind a dilapidated storefront in the small town of Addison Hollows. It was a notebook that included amazing events from the year 2050. How did her grandfather come to possess such a notebook, a notebook that was obviously from the future, and who was the author of its writings? Shannon fearlessly reasoned, “The only way I’m going to find answers to my questions is to find that notebook, no matter what that may require.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Regrettably, As incredible as it sounded, As soon as,**

**STORY STARTER 15**

**Just before she died, Millie Jordan made a crucial change in her will. The Last Will and Testament of Millie Jordan now revealed Millie’s secret wish, her deepest desire, her endless longing that would, without a doubt, leave her now-wealthy heirs penniless. On the other hand, one little girl named, Gwen, would be left in blissful delight. Gwen, the little pauper girl, the girl everyone in Gwen’s family considered trashy and poor and dirty because she dressed only in rags and ate only in soup lines, would be thrilled with the conditions set forth in Millie Jordan’s latest will. Despite the fact that despair and hopelessness had relentlessly shaded every minute of Gwen’s impoverished life, her days were about to be transformed into a rags- to-riches fairy tale beyond her zaniest dreams.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Without exception, All in all, Oftentimes,**

**STORY STARTER 16**

**“Everything happens for a reason, Terry,” Dad insisted.**

**Nevertheless, down in her family's finished basement, Terri sprawled miserably on the brown leather couch as she watched the snow relentlessly fall, leaving a wet, powdered coating on the sliding-glass window. It was so bright outdoors. Even so, inside her heart, Terri did not feel bright at all, as angry tears rolled down her once-tanned cheeks. She had lost count of the number of times she’d cried since her family moved north from Naples, Florida to Auburn Hills, Michigan. Terri yearned for the hot, white sand along Vanderbilt Beach. The beach was her warm, cozy, year-around haven that used to send her passionately spinning with delight as its smooth sands hosted warm, fresh-fish barbeques and crazy, seaside parties. Now, in below-zero weather, Terri felt trapped in a frigid river of despair.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Seized with sorrow, In spite of… If not for…**

**STORY STARTER 17**

**Does anyone out there have any clue just how frightening it is to walk back into your classroom when you’re postive you’ll be questioned about where you’ve been? That describes my helpless feelings the day I was beamed back onto the playground of Little Lake School from my first visit to Space Elementary Station on the other side of this galaxy. I know, I know, sounds like science fiction, right? Wrong! It was real! However, attempting to explain to our strict principal of my whereabouts for the previous six hours of class time was quite a trip in itself. My incredible story began when I was abruptly transported from the playground onto a mysterious ship called Dimension 700. What I saw next was hideous, beastly, and unspeakable!**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**At first, To begin with, Instead of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_,**

**STORY STARTER 18**

**The shrill, continuous screeching in the distance warned Cole Clark that something could be out there. Frozen with fear, Cole had been watching and waiting under an old oak tree for more than three hours. Darkness would soon fall. Cole had tried to run away several times, but his legs seemed to melt into mush each time he moved away from the trees. He saw movement in the dense brush just twenty feet away; he saw flashes of bright lights just a short stretch down the road. Was he truly alone? Did his brothers even know that he was gone? Panic rigidly wrapped itself around him. Either he got himself under control now, before the evening overshadowed the day, or he might soon find himself dreadfully ensnared in the deep, dismal, woods.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Suddenly, Once again, After much reflection,**

**STORY STARTER 19**

**We remained in that tiny trunk flat on our backs for what seemed like hours, but it was probably for only about 45 minutes that we were actually tightly trapped in the trunk of Grandpa’s 2000 Chevy. The ride was horrifically bumpy. I mean, just how many railroad crossings are there in River Truck Township? I hit my head three times that I can remember, while Rick spent his time trying to pry open the trunk latch with a paper clip. By the time the two, scummy, thugs opened the trunk lid, our backs were cringing with cramps, our tongues were shriveled from thirst, and our nerves were entirely shot. However, the big question in both our minds was, “What did these guys want with the two of us? After all, we were just a couple of not-so-popular boys who worked odd hours in a rundown ice cream store on the wrong side of town?”**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**Sometimes, In the first place, Despite our fear,**

**STORY STARTER 20**

**Stale Oreos for breakfast? Yuck! It was ten o'clock, and I, Randy Ransford, was, once again, late for the family picnic. For the second year in a row, I’d carelessly forgotten a family event! These Ransford rat picnics occurred far too often for my furry brain to remember. I bounced out of my corner nest inside the kitchen wall. For a late-morning rat, I dressed in lightening speed. I am always amazed that I can make up for lost time so easily. I brushed the caked Oreos out of my pointed teeth, slicked down my smooth fur, and stumbled over a warm and scaly “thing” on the way out the back screen door. That’s when it happened -- right after I stumbled over that scaly thing. Out of the blue, I noticed that my furry feet were gone, my stunning tail was gone, my fuzzy ears were gone! I could feel them, but they were not there! "Yowzers!" I exclaimed.**

**Choose from one of these sets of transitional words to begin your second paragraph:**

**At first, Exceedingly panicked, Meanwhile,**

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