



# Bridge Sentences

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The first sentence of a new paragraph has a great deal of work to do. Not only is it a “topic sentence” signaling what this new paragraph will do, it must also be a “bridge sentence,” guiding the reader from what you’ve just said to the next step in your reasoning. The key to constructing good bridges is *briefly* repeating what you just finished saying, thus forcing yourself to spell out how the new paragraph follows. **Hence, “Next,” “Additionally,” and “My next point is” are not explicit transitions.**

Here are three styles of paragraph bridges, where...

this is the referent to the previous paragraph  
**this is the logical connection (created by a verb)**  
*this is what the new paragraph is about.*

1. Reiteration (often using pointing words like “this” or “such”). Begin your new paragraph by concisely pointing back to what you just finished saying. This forces you to spell out the logical connection to what you’re about to say.

This flag represented both the possibilities and limitations of the policies of emancipation and equality that transformed the French empire during the 1790’s.<sup>1</sup>

The early Republican victory depended on the key weapon of war Hugues had brought: the abolition of slavery.<sup>2</sup>

2. Asking Questions (*and* answering!) When there appear to be tensions or unresolved contradictions in your previous paragraph, spell them out, and consider how what follows might address the dilemma.

Why had Gros provided two differing accounts of the insurrection? The answer **reflects the convoluted politics of Saint-Domingue and of the French revolutionaries.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Laurent Dubois. “‘The Price of Liberty’: Victor Hugues and the Administration of Freedom in Guadeloupe, 1794-1798.” *William and Mary Quarterly* LVI, no. 2 (1992): 363-392.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Popkin. “Facing Racial Revolution: Captivity Narratives and Identity in the Saint-Domingue Insurrection.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003): 511-533.

3. Complication and Implication. Even when you are simply connecting “reason 1” for your thesis with “reason 2,” you should strive to *go beyond* saying “next” or “another example.” Instead, indicate that matters are becoming more interesting or important in this new paragraph. You can do this either by considering a further **implication** of your previous point, or by considering a **complication** in your argument.

a. Implication: “But wait...it get’s worse!”

The proclamation went beyond asserting the continuing property rights of the ex-masters **to make** theft not only a crime against the owner but *an act of treason against the nation*.<sup>4</sup>

The army was not the only institution that provided rich opportunities for ex-slaves. Hugues encouraged...the *arming of corsairs that roved the eastern Caribbean*....<sup>5</sup>

b. Complication: “Yes, but it gets more complicated.”

**Whereas** some abolitionists interpreted the rebellions as a cue to speed up reforms, *Jefferson’s writings about Haiti suggest a fundamentally different conclusion*.

This evidence of the “standardization” of popular music is complicated, however, by Louis Armstrong’s use of improvisation in jazz composition.

## Kinds of Logical Connections

- Example:** [What I’m about to say] illustrates this [what I just said] by....
- Causation:** [What I just said] **caused**/formed the foundation of/motivates [what I’m about to describe].
- Contrast:** By contrast with this [what I just talked about], [what I’m about to talk about] does [something different].
- Complication:** [But what I’m about to say] calls into question/**complicates** [what I just claimed].
- Precision:** The author **more explicitly**/precisely explains [what I just said] in her discussion of [what I’m about to explain].
- Qualification:** This [what I just said] does not mean [X]; Instead it suggests [what I’m about to say].

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<sup>4</sup> Dubois, 380.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 378.