Conversely, which means “in a contrasting or opposite way,”¹ is used as a signal word to indicate that the information that follows differs from or contradicts the preceding information. This adverb is based on the noun converse, which means “something reversed in order,”² and is not related to the verb with the same spelling that means “to exchange thoughts and opinions in speech.”

At the beginning of a sentence, conversely can be used in the same way as in contrast. However, conversely implies a closer relationship between the statements that precede and follow it and is often used to indicate that when a certain factor or variable is changed, the opposite outcome occurs.

Examples:

Discontinuation of immunosuppression was associated with death (71% vs 21%, \( p = 0.02 \)). Conversely, all patients receiving steroids survived \( (p < 0.001) \).³

Many basketball shoes have high tops to provide ankle support. Conversely, running shoes are low cut to allow freedom of movement.

In the middle of a sentence, conversely is used to show contrast between the first and last parts of the sentence:

Example:

Cancer genetics and epigenetics are inextricably linked in generating the malignant phenotype; epigenetic changes can cause mutations in genes, and, conversely, mutations are frequently observed in genes that modify
the epigenome.4

References


--Bryan Tutt

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