

# Discourse markers



Discourse markers (words like 'however', 'although' and 'Nevertheless') are referred to more commonly as 'linking words' and 'linking phrases', or 'sentence connectors'. They may be described as the 'glue' that binds together a piece of writing, making the different parts of the text 'stick together'. They are used less frequently in speech, unless the speech is very formal. Without sufficient discourse markers in a piece of writing, a text would not seem logically constructed and the connections between the different sentences and paragraphs would not be obvious. There are many discourse markers that express different relationships between ideas. The most common types of relationship between ideas, and the sentence connectors that are most often used to express these relationships, are given in the table below. The discourse markers in the table are generally used at the start of a phrase or clause. (a clause is a minimal grammatical structure that has meaning in its own right, and consists of a subject and verb, and often an object too). Sentence connectors do not always begin a completely new sentence; they may be separated from the previous idea with a semi-colon.

Type of relationship	Sentence connectors	Position within clause/sentence
Adding something	Moreover; In addition; Additionally; Further; Further to this; Also; Besides; What is more.	Initial position
Making a contrast between two separate things, people, ideas, etc.	However; On the other hand; In contrast; Yet.	Initial position
Making an unexpected contrast (concession)	Although; Even though; Despite the fact that; In spite of the fact that; Regardless of the fact that.	Initial position
Starts a second/ subordinate clause	Saying why something is the case	Because; Since; As; Insofar as.
Starts a second/ subordinate clause	Saying what the result of something is	Therefore; Consequently; In consequence; As a result;

Accordingly; Hence; Thus; For this reason; Because of this. Initial position  
Expressing a condition If; In the event of; As long as...; So long as...; Provided that...; Assuming that...; Given that.... Initial position Starts a second/ subordinate clause Making what you say stronger On the contrary; As a matter of fact; In fact; Indeed. Initial position There are two particular features of the sentence connectors indicated above : Sentence connectors can be used to begin a new sentence or a new clause that follows a semi-colon. Some sentence connectors can be placed in different positions within the sentence: initial position (e. g. Because he is ill, he needs to rest.) and 'mid-way position' at the start of another clause (e. g. He must rest, because he is ill).

back ^ How can sentence connectors be replaced in order to increase variety in writing? In your writing, you will want to spend some time ensuring that your work has a sense of variety. In order to do this, you might think of the following : Use conjunctions as well as/instead of sentence connectors. A conjunction is a word like and, but, etc, which is used to join two ideas together into a complex sentence. Unlike sentence connectors such as 'However', etc, a conjunction cannot be used at the beginning of a sentence and must come at a mid-point, at the end of one clause and the beginning of another. It is usually possible to rephrase a pair of sentences that use a sentence connector by using a conjunction instead. For example, instead of saying 'He studied French; however, his wife studied Physics', it might actually be more natural to say 'He studied English but his wife studied Physics'. Similarly, instead of saying 'English is hard; therefore, one must spend a lot of time practising it', we can say: 'English is hard so one must spend a lot of time practising it.' These are simple examples, but the principle of paraphrase can be extended to other, more complex sentences.

Use conjunctions at least some of the time. Words like and and but may seem boring, but they help to lighten the style of your writing. This in turn helps the writing to sound less pompous and formal. And in any case, in writing, it is often helpful to use a variety of structures rather than just saying things in one way. It can also be helpful to omit discourse markers if they do not serve any useful purpose. Knowing when to omit the discourse marker is a subtle aspect of language use and comes with more practice and wider reading. Try joining two clauses together by making one subordinate to the other. If we go back to the sentence 'He studied English but his wife studied Physics', we can rephrase this as follows : 'He studied English whereas his wife studied Physics', or 'He studied English while his wife studied Physics.' The clause beginning with while/whereas is subordinate. this means that it is used to qualify/add extra information to the sentence, but cannot stand on its own. Remember, it can be tedious to read a piece of writing which has too many discourse markers. The writing can seem pedantic, heavy and over-pompous. You are ideally seeking a light, flowing style, not a heavy or forced one. back ^ How are paragraphs linked together? In much the same way that ideas within a paragraph are linked, a new paragraph must be linked in some way with the previous one. This, too, necessitates the use of discourse markers. Here are some different ways in which the opening of a paragraph can link back to what has happened before. The three basic types of paragraph-paragraph relationship are : reinforcement of idea; contrast of idea; and concession. Indicating these relationships builds a 'bridge' between paragraphs and makes reading the text easier. Relationship with previous paragraph Possible linguistic formula Reinforcement of idea a) A further example of this phenomenon can be seen <https://assignbuster.com/discourse-markers/>

in Foucault's work. b) Jones (1999) further demonstrates this point in his most recent research. Contrast of ideas a) Jones, meanwhile/on the other hand, expresses this notion as 'self-defence'. b) This argument is not, however, accepted by all critics. For instance, Smith (1999) holds that....

Concession a) Although the ideas of Jones (1999) are interesting and useful, they do not take account of the growing problems of identity theft. b) While Roberts (2006) emphasises the importance of Foucault's notion of the panopticon, the opposite view is held by other commentators. For

example,... In your own writing, it is useful to consider the following points :

Do my paragraphs serve a definite purpose? What is the exact link between the paragraph I have written and the previous paragraph? Is that link clear?

Are my paragraphs laid out strategically, in order to help me to organise my

materials to best effect? Do my paragraphs help me to build up my ideas in a logical and gradual fashion? Care must also be taken, however, to avoid

over-use of discourse markers. Using too many of them, or using them

unnecessarily, can make a piece of writing sound too heavy and 'artificial'.

They are important, but must only be used when necessary.