

Centre for Teaching and Learning

Signpost words and phrases

Having researched your topic in preparation for writing an essay, you will probably have accumulated a wide range of facts, published research, and other information relevant to the topic. Many people simply throw these facts together in body paragraphs, without properly applying them to the topic or signalling to the reader the connections between them.

Simply adding a few connecting words – known as “signposts” – make it much more readable:

Incorporation offers several advantages to businesses and their owners. **For one thing**, ownership is easy to transfer. The business is able to maintain a continuous existence even when the original owners are no longer involved (Brown, 1999). **In addition**, the stockholders of a corporation are not held responsible for the business's debts (Henry, 2009). If the XYZ Corporation defaults on a \$1 million loan, **for instance**, its investors will not be held responsible for paying that liability. Incorporation **also** enables a business to obtain professional managers with centralised authority and responsibility; **therefore**, the business can be run more efficiently (Schwartz, 2010). **Finally**, incorporation gives a business certain legal rights. **For example**, it can enter into contracts, own property, and borrow money (Brown, 1999).

Transitions show the reader the “movement” between ideas/points. They show that the ideas follow a logical order and build on each other, creating “flow”. If a paragraph flows well from point to point, it should be obvious to the reader when you move from one point to another.

They tell the reader:

- how the main ideas support the thesis statement
- how each group of ideas follow from the ones before, and whether information is:
 - an additional point
 - in contrast to what has been said
 - an example

For example, if you are analysing one study and then comparing it to another in a later paragraph, a transition word or phrase could highlight the change in direction or the creation of a comparison:

In contrast to the conclusion drawn by Smith (2004), Nguyen (2006) showed that the connection between the factors was not causal in most circumstances.

A paragraph that provides a similar point to a previous one could start as follows:

Similarly, Bell (2006) highlights that...

Some of the most common signposts are listed overleaf, according to what they do in or between a paragraph.

Highlighting or emphasising a point

Importantly, ...
 Indeed, ...
 In fact, ...
 More importantly, ...
 Furthermore, ...
 Moreover, ...
 It is also important to highlight ...

Changing direction or creating a comparison

However, ...
 Rather, ...
 In contrast, ...
 Conversely, ...
 On one hand, ...
 On the other hand, ...
 In comparison, ...
 Compared to ...
 Another point to consider is ...

Adding a similar point

Similarly, ...
 Likewise, ...
 Again, ...
 Also, ...

Summarising

Finally, ...
 Lastly, ...
 In conclusion, ...
 To summarise, ...
 In summary, ...
 Overall, ...
 The three main points are ...

Being more specific

In particular, ...
 In relation to ...
 More specifically, ...
 With respect to ...
 In terms of ...

Giving an example

For instance, ...
 For example, ...
 this can be illustrated by ...
 ..., namely, ...
 ..., such as ...

Acknowledging something and moving to a different point

Although ...
 Even though ...
 Despite ...
 Notwithstanding ...

Following a line of reasoning

Therefore, ...
 Subsequently, ...
 Hence ...
 Consequently, ...
 Accordingly, ...
 As a result, ...
 As a consequence, ...
 To this end, ...

ACADEMIC WRITING

Further information is accessible from the Online Writing and Learning Link (OWLL): <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/>
 You can also make an appointment with a consultant at the Centre for Teaching and Learning to talk about academic writing or learning skills: <http://learning.massey.ac.nz/>