

Warm up

Introduce students to the idea of signal words and phrases. Ask them to think of a speech being made in public or in the media. Elicit various phrases that speakers use to link their ideas and keep the listeners focused. There are many such devices but you can prompt, if necessary, with some obvious ones. For example:

I'm going to talk to you today about ...

Now, you might be wondering ...

What I mean by this is ...

This is particularly true with ...

For instance, ...

On that same point, ...

Point out that the signal words and phrases in written texts perform much the same functions (i.e. the functions of explaining, providing an example, describing an effect, emphasizing something, etc.). The words and phrases are more finely tuned, however, because the writer cannot pause, adjust tone of voice, change speed, etc., in the same way a speaker can.

Explain that there are too many words and phrases to learn in one Worksheet, but students will get a good idea of the main ones. Reassure them that they are not generally difficult to understand, and the main focus of their attention will be in using a variety of them so that their own academic work benefits.

Practice

Note: Throughout this *Worksheet*, students need to notice the finer details of the target words/phrases, such as when and how to use them, whether they begin a sentence, whether they are followed by a comma/gerund/clause, etc. Point these things out as they come up.

1 Look at the extracts below and circle two phrases that could replace those in bold. Suggest ways you could use some of the wrong answers.

- Do the first extract together with students so that everyone knows what to do. Point out *as a result of* and elicit the function (explaining a cause). Ask *What can replace this phrase?* Elicit that both *due to* and *because of* perform exactly the same function and also fit grammatically in the sentence. Now ask *What's wrong with the other two answers?* and elicit that they convey the opposite meaning (explaining an *effect*). Ask students to use the wrong answers in a sentence. If there is any difficulty with this, you could write the following on the board to show that the meaning is the opposite of what is intended:

*Water and sanitation facilities were getting worse **as a result of** / **due to** / **because of** a rapid rise in the population.*

*There was a rapid rise in the population **leading to** / **resulting in** water and sanitation facilities getting worse.*

- Allow up to five minutes for students to do the other extracts. Ideally, they should work alone, but if they are having difficulty understanding, allow them to work in pairs. As you check the answers, encourage suggestions for how to use the wrong answers. Sentences could be on the same subject, as in the example above, or a different subject. Get the whole class to contribute, and make sure they are aware of the finer differences as mentioned in the **Note** above.

Answers

- a** due to / because of
(See above for suggested sentences)
- b** Nevertheless / However
- c** and / together with
- d** To put it simply / By this I mean
- e** In spite of the fact that / While

2 Use the words and phrases from Exercise 1 to complete the table.

- Explain the task. Tell students they are going to classify all the words from Exercise 1 according to their function.
- Allow a few minutes for students to work alone and try to fill in the table. If, after a period of time, students don't seem to have found many points, allow them to compare notes with a partner.

Answers



Showing a cause/result	Adding points
due to leading to resulting in because of (this)	as well as both together with additionally
Explaining	Showing differences/contrast
in other words to put it simply by this I mean to put it another way	on the other hand nevertheless although despite (this) however

3 Cross out the option that does not make sense. Use that word or phrase in a sentence of your own.

- Allow a minute or two for students to try to do the task on their own. Then, if you prefer, you can put them in pairs or small groups to compare ideas. As you check the answers, encourage suggestions for how to use the wrong answers, just as you did in Exercise 1. Accept any logical sentences.

Answers

- a** whereas
- b** Nevertheless,
- c** despite
- d** in other words
- e** However
- f** as well as being able to

4   In pairs or small groups, discuss your answers to Exercise 3. Say how the meaning changes with different options. Talk about the functions of the words/phrases. What do they tell us about the writer's intention?

- Go through the example step by step, pointing out the different functions of the signal words and phrases.
- Allow up to five minutes for students to discuss items 2–6 in their pairs or groups. Elicit suggestions, accepting all logical explanations. If time allows, encourage discussion on some of the finer differences in meaning in the task. Make sure all the students have understood.

Reflect

5 How good do you think you have become at understanding and using signal words and phrases? Look at the underlined sections in the sentences below and, in pairs or small groups, discuss their function. Can you suggest alternatives that would do the same job?

- Encourage students to think about what they have covered with this **Worksheet**. Explain that this task is a good indication of how much they have understood.
- Allow a minute or two for students to read the sentences on their own.
- After a suitable length of time, encourage them to share their views with other students and with you.

Possible answers

- a** Function: to express similarity. Alternatives: *Similarly, / In a similar way*
- b** Function: to emphasize a point. Alternatives: *particularly / chiefly*
- c** Function: to show a single cause. Alternatives: *purely because / only because*
- d** Function: to explain. Alternatives: *which is why he had*
- e** Function: to express similarity. Alternatives: *in the same way as / like*
- f** Function: to emphasize a point; Alternatives: *The main factor / The key*

6 Discuss how the following signal words and phrases might be used.

- Depending on the time available, you could do this orally in class, in writing in class or assign it for homework.
- Finally, refer students back to the table in Exercise 2 and tell them to refer to it the next time they do some academic writing. Remind students that the table has four categories, but that there are more, as they discussed in Exercises 4 and 5. Remind them too of the need to use a variety of these words/phrases in their own academic writing – not to rely on one or two often-repeated words/phrases. Students may like to make a new table so that they can add new words and phrases as they meet them. Alternatively, they may wish to keep a running list of such words/phrases. Either approach will help them monitor their own progress as they gradually add variety to their academic writing.