

READING TIP

STUDY SKILLS: Signal words and phrases

Academic writers use signalling words and phrases in their texts. These help the reader because they organize the text by, for example, connecting ideas, introducing examples and showing what the author considers important.

This Reading Worksheet is about signal words and phrases. It includes a variety of different words and phrases for specific functions, which you can learn to recognize and use. They will help you understand new texts as you read them.

Practice

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.

a In the decade before the earthquake, water and sanitation facilities were getting worse **as a result of** a rapid rise in the population.

- leading to
- due to
- resulting in
- because of

b Much of the criticism aimed at the Ocean Cleanup project seems to be prompted by Slat's youth, inexperience and apparent 'naivety', and to an extent these reservations are understandable. **On the other hand**, issues such as ocean pollution sometimes need a fresh and innovative problem-solving approach, and this is exactly what this project offers.

- Nevertheless
- However
- Additionally
- Because of this

c However, change can offer opportunities **as well as** challenges.

- and
- both
- also
- together with

d Then, because of the precise angle of the leaves, gravity pulls the droplets off the leaf, taking all dirt particles with them. **In other words**, the lotus plant cleans itself.

- To put it simply
- Although
- By this I mean
- As a result of

e **Although** their immediate political concerns vary from region to region, millennials in all areas surveyed are interested in social justice, improving everyone's access to education, and religious tolerance.


- In spite of the fact that
- Thanks to
- While
- Despite

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

Showing a cause/result	Adding points
as a result of thanks to _____ _____ _____ _____	and also _____ _____ _____ _____
Explaining	Showing differences/contrast
to rephrase what I'm saying is _____ _____ _____ _____	in spite of the fact that while _____ _____ _____ _____

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

- a I drink a lot of coffee **even though / in spite of the fact that / whereas / although / despite the fact that** it keeps me awake.
- b Cars and roads are now safer. **What is more, / Furthermore, / Nevertheless, / Moreover, / In addition,** street lighting is far more efficient than it used to be.
- c There are several factors contributing to the high crime rate, **for example / despite / for instance / such as** poor enforcement of the law and extreme poverty.
- d There are many cities which display this phenomenon, **the most noteworthy being / a good example being / in other words / most notably** London.
- e We dream of a future where we have a better understanding of the universe and our place in it. **Fundamental to this / A chief consideration / However / A significant factor in this** is the need to encourage young people to study the sciences.
- f He moved to Paris, where he was a complete unknown, **in order to be able to / to be able to / so that he could / as well as being able to** continue painting anonymously.

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?

e.g. a

I drink a lot of coffee **even though / in spite of the fact that / although / despite the fact that** it keeps me awake.

= I know the consequences but I still drink coffee (and suffer for it); the words/phrases tell us that the writer does it anyway.

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?

- a** The buses used in our town are long overdue for replacement. Likewise, our light rail network is falling apart.
- b** The smoke damages buildings and pollutes the atmosphere, but it is especially dangerous for people who live and work in it.
- c** The country was left off the old map solely because the map maker had no idea it existed.
- d** The chairman was initially planning to fire all of those involved until he realized his son was one of them – hence the change of heart.
- e** He started out studying fine arts, just as his father had done before him.
- f** We are looking at ways to stop young people turning to crime. The chief factor in all of this is, of course, education.

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

- firstly
- above all ...
- both ... and ...
- to put it another way
- specifically
- not only ... but also ...