

Signposting

Signposting language can help you guide the reader through your writing and make sure the order is clear and flows well. These are small words or phrases that help the reader follow your argument, understand the relationship between your ideas and anticipate what's going to come next.

These words may not seem important, but they're really the glue that holds a piece of writing together. Without signposting language, writing can lose direction, become confused and read like a series of unrelated points. Try reading the paragraph without them and see how it changes the meaning.

Signposting words are useful in the introduction to signal your structure, and echoed in the first lines of paragraphs to indicate how the paragraphs relate to each other. They are also useful at sentence level to make the links between them clear. There are different kinds of links and relationships, so you need to choose a signposting word that does the right job.

Signposting of order

You can use these kinds of signposting words to direct the reader through your writing, provide a 'roadmap' for the order in which you're going to talk about things, help them keep on track throughout and remind them of key information or anticipate questions. This kind of signposting can be especially useful for introductions, conclusions and when transitioning from one big idea to another or talking about methods and procedures.

Signposting of order	Why?	Examples
Listing	Informs readers of the writing's overall structure	First/Firstly,... To begin with... Second/Secondly,... Afterwards,... Next,... Then,... Following this... Finally,...

		<p>Lastly,...</p> <p>To conclude,...</p>
Referring Forward	Helps readers anticipate content that'll appear later in the writing	<p>In the following section...</p> <p>As we shall see,...</p> <p>As explored below,...</p> <p>As will be explained later,...</p>
Referring Backward	Reminds readers of important information mentioned earlier	<p>In the previous section,...</p> <p>As we have seen,...</p> <p>As demonstrated above,...</p> <p>As indicated earlier,...</p> <p>As discussed previously,...</p> <p>Prior to this,...</p> <p>Initially,...</p>
Transitioning Between Points	Helps readers identify where they are in the writing's overall structure	<p>Turning now to...</p> <p>Moving on to...</p> <p>Having considered...we will now consider...</p> <p>It is now necessary to...</p> <p>This section identifies...</p> <p>Next...</p>

Signposting of Relations

You can use these kinds of words to show that you are constructing logical steps in your argument, showing relationship between ideas and make it clear to the reader where you're identifying similarities and differences; cause and effect; summaries; examples; or particularly important pieces of information.

Signposting of relations	Why?	Examples
Addition	Tells the reader that this point builds on the previous	<p>As well as,...</p> <p>In addition...</p> <p>Additionally,...</p> <p>What is more...</p> <p>Another...</p> <p>Besides...</p> <p>Also,...</p> <p>Further,...</p> <p>To elaborate,...</p>
Similarity	Tells the reader that that this point is a further example of the previous	<p>Similarly,...</p> <p>Likewise,...</p> <p>Just as..., so too...</p> <p>In the same way,...</p> <p>Correspondingly,...</p> <p>Complementary to this...</p>
Illustration	Prepares the reader for an example	<p>For example,...</p> <p>For instance,...</p> <p>To illustrate,...</p> <p>In particular,</p> <p>One way...</p> <p>One such...</p> <p>...such as...</p> <p>...like...</p>

		...including... Namely,... Notably,... ...as can be seen in... ...as demonstrated by... ...exemplifies...
Contrast	Tells the reader that this point is in opposition to the previous	In contrast,... In comparison,... However,... Rather,.. Conversely,... Instead,... Whereas,... On the other hand,... Even so,... Otherwise,... Alternatively,... Despite this,... Actually,... Nonetheless,... Nevertheless,... That aside,... While this may be true... And yet,... Notwithstanding... Then again,...

		On the contrary,...
Cause-and-Effect	Tells the reader that this point is a result of the previous	<p>Therefore,...</p> <p>Consequently,...</p> <p>Accordingly,...</p> <p>Thus,...</p> <p>As a result,...</p> <p>This means that...</p> <p>This causes...</p> <p>Hence,...</p> <p>For this reason...</p> <p>Because of this...</p> <p>In view of this,...</p> <p>With this in mind...</p> <p>It can be seen that...</p> <p>Resulting from this...</p> <p>As a result,...</p> <p>This suggests that...</p> <p>Subsequently,...</p>
Summary	Prepares the reader for a summary of previous points	<p>In summary,...</p> <p>To sum up...</p> <p>Overall,...</p> <p>Altogether,...</p> <p>In brief,...</p> <p>In short,...</p> <p>In all,...</p>

		On the whole,... To review,...
	Reformulation Provides the reader with another way of saying the same thing	In other words,... Rather,... Better still,... Stated otherwise,... That is to say,... Put simply... To look at this another way....
Emphasis	Helps the reader identify key information	In particular,... Especially... Indeed,... Importantly,... In fact,... Moreover,... Furthermore,... Chiefly,... Mainly,... Mostly,...

Tips for using signposting language

Choose wisely

Signposting words aren't interchangeable and can be really confusing for the reader if used inappropriately. So make sure you choose the right word to reflect the relationship you're trying to communicate.

Use deliberately

You don't need to use a signposting word in every sentence, so before you do ask yourself if it helps make the meaning clearer, or just bogs down the writing.

Edit carefully

When you want to get the wordcount down, you might be tempted to get rid of signposting words first so you can keep more of the information. This might not be as useful as it seems, though, because lots of information without any signposting can make it really difficult for the reader to understand what you're trying to say.