

Lesson Plan: Discourse markers in academic writing

Level	Intermediate / Advanced (B1-C1)
Time	60-75 minutes
Skills	Writing, vocabulary
Focus	Sequencing, addition, contrast, result, and summary markers in formal written English

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Use a wide range of discourse markers accurately in formal written English
- Understand the precise function each marker performs
- Use discourse markers to improve the cohesion and flow of academic paragraphs
- Avoid overusing however, therefore, and furthermore at the expense of variety

TARGET LANGUAGE & EXAMPLES

Sequencing and ordering

- First(ly), Second(ly), Third(ly), Finally, To begin with, Initially
- Subsequently: The data was collected. Subsequently, it was analysed.
- Prior to / Following: Prior to the merger, the company had struggled.

Addition

- Furthermore, Moreover, In addition, What is more, Not only...but also
- Equally: The cost was high. Equally, the timeline was unrealistic.

Contrast and concession

- However, Nevertheless, Nonetheless, That said, Even so
- In contrast, On the other hand, By contrast, Conversely

Result and summary

- Therefore, Consequently, As a result, Thus, Hence
- In conclusion, To summarise, In summary, Overall, In brief

Exemplification and clarification

- For example, For instance, To illustrate, Specifically, In particular
- In other words, That is (to say), Namely, i.e.

Meaning & Nuance

Function	Formal markers	Less formal
Add a point	furthermore, moreover, in addition	also, and
Show contrast	however, nevertheless, conversely	but, although
Show result	therefore, consequently, hence	so, as a result

Summarise	in conclusion, to summarise	in short, so
Give example	for instance, to illustrate	for example, like
Clarify	in other words, that is to say	I mean, basically

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up: Classify the marker (10 min)

Task: 10 discourse markers on cards. Students sort into function categories.

→ Builds awareness of function before working with the markers in context.

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Five categories: sequencing, addition, contrast, result, exemplification.

- Focus on register: however/nevertheless (formal) vs. but (informal).
- Common errors: starting too many sentences with 'Furthermore' — vary within the category.

3. Cloze task (15 min)

Task: Academic paragraph with 10 discourse markers removed. Students restore them.

- Multiple answers often possible — discuss which feels most natural.

4. Paragraph rewriting (25 min)

Task: Rewrite a flat paragraph that uses only 'also', 'but', and 'so' throughout.

- Requirement: use at least 5 different discourse markers from 4 different categories.
- Peer review: do the markers improve cohesion and flow?

TEACHER NOTES

- Students often know a few markers very well and overuse them. The goal is variety and precision.
- Discourse markers are heavily weighted in IELTS Writing Task 2 and Cambridge Writing marking criteria.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one or more:

1. Write a short essay paragraph using at least 6 different discourse markers from 4 different categories.
2. Analyse a paragraph from an academic article: identify and label every discourse marker by function.
3. Rewrite a paragraph replacing all instances of 'but', 'also', and 'so' with more formal alternatives.