What are CONNECTIVES?

Connectives are words or phrases that show the connections or relationships between ideas in writing and in speech.

Good writing needs to be as clear as possible so that a reader can easily follow your sentences, ideas and details. Use cohesive devices to link individual sentences and parts of sentences and to help the reader to follow the movement of ideas with ease. These devices will also help your writing to flow naturally, without unnecessary repetition.

Academic writing and speaking usually deals with complex ideas. To enable the reader to follow your thoughts and the connections between them, these complex ideas need to be clearly and smoothly linked. Examples of various types of links are given below.

Emphasis Words

Among the most valuable signals for you to know are emphasis words, through which the writer or speaker tells you directly that a particular idea or detail is especially important.

- It is important to note...
- It is especially valuable ...
- It should be noted ...
- It is most noteworthy ...
- It is especially relevant ...
- In particular ...
- Indeed it is ...
- The chief outcome ...
- A primary concern is ...
- A central issue ...
- A distinctive quality ...
- A major event is ...
- A vital force ...
- Above all ...
- Most of all ...
- A significant factor is ...

Change-of-Direction Words (Contrasting)

Change-of-direction words tell you that the writer will probably reverse or modify a previous statement.

- but
- on the contrary
- even though
- yet
- on the other hand
- conversely
- despite
- apart from
- alternatively
- unless
- instead
- however
- in contrast
- if
- otherwise
- nevertheless
- as long as
- whereas
- unlike
- except
- although

Addition Words

Addition words tell you that the writer or speaker’s thought is going to continue in the same direction. He or she is going to add more points or details of the same kind.

- first
- second
- another
- and
- likewise
- furthermore
- moreover
- besides
- similarly
- first of all
- the third reason
- also
- in addition
- next
- for one thing
- too
- as well as
- finally
- last of all
Illustration Words

Illustration words tell you an example or illustration will be given to make an idea clear.

- for example
- for instance
- in the case of
- as revealed by
- specifically
- to illustrate
- such as
- as shown by

Conclusion Words

Conclusion words tell you to expect the writer’s final and possibly most important point within a paragraph or larger unit of thought.

- therefore
- finally
- in summary
- in conclusion
- thus
- ultimately
- as a result
- in the end
- hence
- all in all
- last of all
- to sum up

Sequencing Words

Sequencing words tell you that the writer or speaker is describing a series of steps that follow a particular order as in a process, or express the order in which the writers'/speakers' thoughts flow.

- first, second, third
- next
- meanwhile
- eventually
- then
- finally
- after
- before

Comparing Words

Comparing words tell you that the writer/speaker is referring to similar ideas.

- equally
- similarly
- as with
- compared with
- resembles
- in the same way
- likewise
- like
- correspondingly

(Hint: DO NOT OVERUSE
It is important
1. not to use too many connectives, and
2. to vary their position in sentences i.e. not always at the start of sentences.

Examples:

01 If people stopped drinking, they might be able to prevent liver cirrhosis. The government should help in preventing this disease because they permit the production and sale of alcohol. Government resources, however, are limited.

02 Although the government was elected for a three-year term, the Prime Minister decided to hold an early election. Meanwhile, the opposition parties, which had anticipated this move, had been planning their own election campaigns, but they had not expected such immediate public support.
Analyse the following paragraph for cohesion (reference and connectives).

Shrinking Glaciers

From the high mountains to the vast polar ice sheets, the world is losing its ice faster than anyone thought possible. Even scientists who had monitored Chacaltaya since 1991 thought it would hold out for a few more years. It’s no surprise that glaciers are melting as emissions from cars and industry warm the climate. But lately, the ice loss has outstripped the upward creep of global temperatures.

Scientists are finding that glaciers and ice sheets are surprisingly touchy. Instead of melting steadily, like an ice cube on a summer day, they are prone to feedbacks, when melting begets more melting and the ice shrinks precipitously. At Chacaltaya, for instance, the shrinking glacier exposed dark rocks, which sped up its demise by soaking up heat from the sun. Other feedbacks are shriveling bigger mountain glaciers ahead of schedule and sending polar ice sheets slipping into the ocean.


Hint: Reference words refer to something mentioned beforehand. E.g. the man’s → his

The Wind said to the Sun, "I am much stronger than you." "You are not," replied the Sun. "I can prove my strength," said the Wind. "See that man? I will blow off his hat and coat. Watch me do it now!" He blew with all his might, but the harder he blew the more the man wrapped his coat around him. Then the Sun had a turn. His happy beams calmed the air, warmed the earth and made the man feel so hot that he took off his hat and coat. It is better to be gentle than rough.

Aesop's Fables, 1967

Strategies to improve cohesion
1. Select a piece of writing (textbook or journal article) from your area of study.
2. Take a paragraph and underline all the different forms of cohesion used (reference and connectives.)
3. Which forms are the most common?
4. Choose a few that you think are effective and practice using them in your own writing.
5. Try to use a variety of ways to show the relationship(s) between your ideas.

Useful references on cohesion

Answers to Activity 1

and
for instance
instead of
but

02 Connectives

the shrinking glacier
the shrinking glacier exposed dark rock
which

glaciers and ice sheets
they

Chacaltaya

it

the shrinking glacier
its

Reference words

Answers to Activity 2

so...
that
Then
and
but

02 Connectives

 Blow off his hat and coat - it

That man - his - him - the man - he - his

The Sun - the Sun - the Sun - his

might - He

The wind - I - you - my the wind - I - me - He - his

Reference words