



Essay Signposting

What are Essay Signposts?

In academic writing, key words, phrases or topic sentences are employed to indicate to the reader the direction or location of the essay or argument (Day, 2018). Sometimes referred to as transitions, connectives or connectors, essay signposts are words used to steer your essay in a particular direction, and to indicate a particular form or function (Greetham, 2013).

Why do I need to signpost in my Essay?

Signposting is clear indicator of critical, analytical writing and thinking, as the reader doesn't have to pause to consider where they are in an argument, or whether the author intends to accept or refute a viewpoint (Cottrell, 2017). A good essay does not rely on font-formatting or subheadings to create a sense of direction, so a signpost is a simple yet effective way of making connections between previous and subsequent points.

Introducing

Used to signal the opening of an argument:

Firstly ⚙ First of all ⚙ To begin ⚙ At the outset ⚙ Initially ⚙ This essay will begin by...
This essay intends to...

Introduction of New Information

Used to signify new information to reinforce the line of reasoning:

Also ⚙ In addition ⚙ Besides ⚙
Furthermore ⚙ Moreover

Placing Ideas in Time

Used to introduce a structured order to arguments, particularly when attributing weight to individual points:

Firstly ⚙ Secondly ⚙ Thirdly ⚙ Finally
Concurrently ⚙ Simultaneously ⚙ At least
Earlier ⚙ Later ⚙ Eventually ⚙ At once

Similar Reasoning

Used to indicate similar ideas to the ones already included:

Similarly ⚙ Likewise ⚙ Equally ⚙ In the same way ⚙ In similar respect to

Different Reasoning

Used to reinforce a different line of reasoning, in addition to the ones already used:

In addition ⚙ Besides ⚙ As well as ⚙ Not only ⚙ In opposition ⚙

Using Evidence

Used to demonstrate the viewpoints of experts in the field, so you can use it to support or refute an argument:

States ⚙ Demonstrates ⚙ Considers ⚙ It has been noted ⚙ Research has found ⚙ Supporting evidence exists

Illustrating Examples

For example ◉ For instance ◉ Namely
Specifically In particular

Strengthening Arguments

To demonstrate an argument of particular importance:

Furthermore ◉ Moreover ◉ Indeed ◉
What is more ◉ Such as

Alternative Arguments

Used to demonstrate other perspectives to that of the main argument:

Alternatively ◉ Others argue that ◉ It might be argued that...

Rebutting Arguments

Explore the weaknesses of alternative arguments presented in your essay, as compared to the main argument:

However ◉ Nonetheless ◉ On the other hand ◉ Notwithstanding this... ◉ Yet

Demonstrating Cause & Effect

Used to show the relationship between two points:

As a result ◉ Accordingly ◉ For this reason
Consequently

References

Cottrell, S. (2017). *Critical Thinking Skills: Effective Analysis, Argument and Reflection (3rd Edition)*. London: Palgrave.

Day, T. (2018). *Success in Academic Writing (2nd Edition)*. London: Palgrave.

Greetham, B. (2013). *How to Write Better Essays (3rd Edition)*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

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Contrasting Arguments

Used to move and back and forth between opposing arguments, for effective critical analysis:

Although ◉ Conversely ◉ Contrarily ◉ In contrast ◉ On the other hand ◉ In fact
Otherwise

Expressing Consequences

Usually found towards the ends of an essay, these words are used to convey how the argument should be interpreted as a whole:

As a result ◉ As a consequence ◉ Thus
Consequently ◉ In consequence ◉ Hence

Summarising

Used to wrap up the main points of an argument, to present them in a succinct way:

In summary ◉ In brief ◉ In short
Altogether ◉ All in all

Concluding

Used to finish your line of reasoning and to demonstrate your own argument as paramount:

In conclusion ◉ Therefore ◉ It is apparent that ◉ It can be seen ◉ Thus