DISCOURSE MARKERS – CONNECTORS

The word discourse is used to refer to a piece or unit of writing or speech that is longer than, respectively, a sentence or an utterance. In writing, especially academic writing, it is essential for the author to guide the reader through the discourse signalling what is important and how each sentence connects to others. Readers who have to "work" too hard to understand where to focus their attention and to link together the concepts presented in the writing do not have enough mental energy to process the author's ideas and to remember them after having finished reading.

One of the main ways that authors help guide readers through discourse is by "marking" how the coming sentence or clause (**NB** discourse markers generally come *at the beginning* of clauses and sentences) relates back to previous discourse. Thus if the author wants to show a continuation of a previous line of thought, s/he will begin the coming sentence with a marker such as *in addition* or *moreover*. This automatically helps the reader to approach the coming sentence with the knowledge of how it relates to the theme the author is constructing (i.e. this is another sentence in support of an idea previously posited). If, on the other hand, the author wants to signal a change in direction of the discourse, s/he will utilize a marker such as *on the other hand* or *conversely* (now go back to the beginning of this sentence and note how the phrase *on the other hand* prepared you to understand that the sentence would pose an idea in opposition to the previously presented idea of *supporting a previous theme,* replaced by the concept of *contrasting a previous theme*).

It isn't easy to present a complete list of discourse markers and their various functions. There are many of them, and, perhaps even more importantly, some of them are used more in speech than in writing, or vice versa or some of them are more informally used than formally and so on and so on. The best way to understand an effective use of discourse markers (which, remember, is essential for academic writing!) is to read a lot. However, reading without paying special attentions to discourse markers may be somewhat helpful, but not completely. You must take a step back from the reading process in order to pick out and notice how the author is employing discourse markers and what they add to the reading experience. In this way, you can begin to develop both a conscious and unconscious knowledge of how to use them yourself. What's important is NOT to simply throw discourse markers haphazardly into your writing. This is the case, for example, of learners who remember suddenly, "oh yeah, I'm supposed to be using those discourse markers" and then arbitrarily write one of the common ones remembered at the moment (indeed, for some unknown reason, Italian students love *moreover* and use it constantly, often when it's not appropriate).

I have compiled some lists of discourse markers for you to look at and study, and to keep close at hand when you are writing. While it is obvious that you may develop a preference for certain discourse markers, you should try to vary them, especially now as you are learning to write academic English. You are in the process of learning and developing a writing style and so if you limit yourself to the use of just a few discourse markers now, you will inevitably continue to develop a style which is more limited and less versatile.

Below you will find 3 separate lists and/or tables which show discourse markers, their functions, grammatical definitions and some examples. I have decided to include all three, even if this means that there are repetitions, in order to show you how different people might look at discourse markers differently. In other words, these are not mathematical formulas but rather expressions which may be interpreted and utilized in slightly different ways by different authors. You may find that one list or table in particular appeals to you in its presentation, explanation and organization. Or you may vary between them without a

particular preference; what's important is that you don't simply read through them once, but that instead you refer to them during your writing process so as to stimulate your creativity and remind yourself of the importance of discourse marker usage in your writing.

A LIST OF DISCOURSE MARKERS WITH EXAMPLES

with regard to; regarding; as regards; as far as …… is concerned, as for
These expressions focus attention on what follows in the sentence. This is done by announcing the subject in advance. As regards and as far as……is concerned usually indicate a change of subject

Examples:
His grades in science subjects are excellent. As regards humanities …
With regard to the latest market figures we can see that ...
Regarding our efforts to improve the local economy, we have made ...
As far as I am concerned, we should continue to develop our resources.
As for John's thoughts, let's take a look at this report he sent me.

on the other hand; while; whereas
These expressions give expression to two ideas which contrast but do not contradict each other.

Examples:
Football is popular in England, while in Australia they prefer cricket.
We've been steadily improving our customer service center.
On the other hand our shipping department needs to be redesigned.
Jack thinks we're ready to begin whereas Tom things we still need to wait.

however, nonetheless, nevertheless
All these words are used to present two contrasting ideas.

Examples:
Smoking is proved to be dangerous to the health. Nonetheless, 40% of the population smokes.
Our teacher promised to take us on a field trip. However, he changed his mind last week.
Peter was warned not to invest all of his savings in the stock market. Nevertheless, he invested and lost everything.

moreover, furthermore, in addition
We use these expressions to add information to what has been said. The usage of these words is much more elegant than just making a list or using the conjunction 'and'.

Examples:
His problems with his parents are extremely frustrating. Moreover, there seems to be no easy solution to them.
I assured him that I would come to his presentation. Furthermore, I also invited a number of important representatives from the local chamber of commerce.
Our energy bills have been increasing steadily. In addition to these costs, our telephone costs have doubled over the past six months.

therefore, as a result, consequently

These expressions show that the second statement follows logically from the first statement.

Examples:
He reduced the amount of time studying for his final exams. As a result, his marks were rather low.
We've lost over 3,000 customers over the past six months. Consequently, we have been forced to cut back our advertising budget.
The government has drastically reduced its spending. Therefore, a number of programs have been cancelled.

CONNECTORS TABLE

Type of Connector	Connector(s)	Examples
Coordinating conjunctions	**for (cause), so (effect)**	*Professionals can sometimes be extremely impatient, for their positions are at times rather stressful.*
Subordinating conjunctions	**because, since**	*Since high level positions are at times rather stressful, professionals can sometimes be extremely impatient.*
Conjunctive adverbs	**therefore, as a result, consequently**	*High level positions are at times rather stressful; therefore, professionals can sometimes be extremely impatient.*
Prepositions	**because of, due to, as a result of**	*Due to the stressful nature of high level positions, professionals can sometimes be extremely impatient.*
Type of Connector	**Connector(s)**	*Examples*
Coordinating Conjunction	**and**	*High level positions are stressful at times, and can be harmful to your health.*
Conjunctive adverbs	**in addition, additionally, furthermore, moreover, also**	*High level positions are stressful at times; furthermore, they can be harmful to your health*
Correlative conjunctions	**not only…but also**	*Not only are high level positions stressful at times, but they also can be harmful to your health.*
Prepositional phrases	**in addition to, along with, as well as**	*Along with being stressful, high level positions can also be harmful to your health*
Type of Connector	**Connector(s)**	*Examples*
Coordinating conjunction	**but**	*High level positions are stressful at times, but professionals can learn to manage their stress levels.*
Subordinating conjunctions	**although, despite the fact that**	*Despite the fact that high level positions are stressful at times, professionals can learn to manage their stress levels.*
Conjunctive adverbs	**however, nevertheless**	*High level positions are stressful at times; nevertheless, professionals can learn to manage their stress levels.*
Prepositional	**despite, in spite of**	*In spite of the stressful nature of high level*