

DISCOURSE MARKERS

Whether in formal or informal, spoken or written English, we use a variety of words and expressions not only to connect ideas and information into a logical sequence, but also to express a viewpoint, attitude, or even influence the attitude of the listener or reader.

Being critical of someone passing a test, you might say '*Frankly*, she doesn't stand a chance'.

Being apologetic about forgetting an appointment, you might say '*I'm afraid* I forgot about our meeting'.

These are **attitude markers**, and are used to make a comment on the message conveyed by a speaker or writer.

STUDY TIPS

Attitude markers often express subtleties of meaning, so it is important to learn their precise meanings and the different contexts in which they can be used. This way you'll avoid any awkward or misleading expressions.

Using attitude markers correctly may be somewhat challenging at first, but mastering them will show an appreciation of the subtleties of meaning, and indicate your position on a matter or issue. They make your language more interesting *stylistically*.

Forms

There are various forms, which function as attitude markers, ranging from a single word to various phrases and clauses. Here is a list of the most common structures.

adverbs:	<i>honestly; personally; candidly; naturally; even more importantly</i>
prepositional phrases:	<i>on the contrary; in all honesty</i>
short finite clauses:	<i>if I may say so; if I can be frank; if I may be permitted</i>
infinitive clauses:	<i>to be precise; to be sure</i>

Conveying A Viewpoint Or Attitude

The speaker or writer uses attitude markers to comment on the content of the message conveyed. Deciding which marker to use will depend on, for example, what truth is known about the situation, from what perspective a point of view is being expressed, the degree of someone's doubt or conviction, etc. There are numerous meanings, which can be conveyed.

On the following pages is a list of some of the more common attitude markers and their meanings.

Meaning	Attitude Marker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express an idea from a particular viewpoint 	<i>technically; ideally; theoretically; financially; economically; historically; from a literary perspective; environment-wise; superficially; nominally; strategically</i>
<p>Examples: Technically, your proposal is sound, but finance-wise, is it manageable? Ideally, it's good to have a smoke alarm in each room of the house.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to say something you may believe is true but aren't certain about; there is a degree of doubt 	<i>apparently; presumably; reportedly; supposedly; maybe (informal); allegedly; possibly; perhaps; no doubt</i>
<p>Examples: Presumably, you are well enough to go to work now. Allegedly, he was involved in the bank robbery.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express that which is true in principle 	<i>basically; essentially; fundamentally</i>
<p>Examples: Basically, he's a workaholic, so you won't see him getting involved in the charity run. Essentially, the laser scans the bar code and registers the product details.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express whether someone's expectations have been met or not 	<i>as a matter of fact; in fact; to tell the truth; to tell you the truth</i>
<p>Examples: Did you like his new film? No, as a matter of fact, it was terrible. Did you pass the maths test? I sure did. In fact, I got a B+.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express an opinion which you believe is true but it may be unpleasant to hear; it may be expressed in confidence* 	<i>frankly; personally; candidly; all things considered; to be perfectly frank; bluntly; if I may say so; honestly; without beating around the bush (informal)</i> <i>between you and me (informal)*; confidentially*</i>
<p>Examples: Frankly, that dress isn't very flattering. Honestly, Sue, I didn't mean to hurt you?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express a strong belief or opinion which has a degree of certainty 	<i>obviously; clearly; evidently; certainly; definitely; indeed (formal); surely; visibly, undeniably; undoubtedly; unquestionably; plainly; to be sure; of course</i>
<p>Examples: Undeniably, the river has been polluted by industrial waste from the factory. The inquiry into the matter of corruption has, indeed, vindicated him.</p>	

Meaning	Attitude Marker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express something positive in reference to a pleasing result 	<p><i>fortunately, happily, luckily</i></p>
<p>Examples: Fortunately, no lives were lost in the torrential rains. Happily, the couple were able to resolve their differences through counselling.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express dissatisfaction or something negative 	<p><i>annoyingly, unfortunately, unhappily, unluckily</i></p>
<p>Examples: Unfortunately, no immediate assistance was given to the victims of the train disaster. Unluckily, Jill got caught in the thunderstorm on her way home from work.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express something that is unusual 	<p><i>curiously, strangely, strangely enough, surprisingly, oddly, oddly enough, astonishingly, suspiciously, amazingly</i></p>
<p>Examples: Surprisingly, only a handful of people attended the celebration. Oddly enough, I didn't understand a thing the communications expert said.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express an opinion on someone's behaviour 	<p><i>rightly, wrongly, foolishly, stupidly, wisely, sensibly, cleverly</i></p>
<p>Examples: Foolishly, he spent his entire inheritance, and is now left with nothing in the bank. Wisely, the teacher discouraged the student from getting over tired before the test.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to express an opinion so as not to upset anyone 	<p><i>more or less, kind of, sort of, well, so to speak</i></p>
<p>Examples: The tour of the museum was kind of interesting. What did you think of her new boyfriend? Well, he's OK.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to show that you are conceding on a point or fact in an argument; it can qualify or contradict the point being made 	<p><i>admittedly, really, in reality, of course, actually</i></p>
<p>Examples: Admittedly, it was a difficult test, but fair. Of course, there are certain paragraphs in the document which have to be amended.</p>	

Position of attitude markers in the sentence and punctuation

Attitude markers are used to comment on the entire sentence, and are flexible in terms of their position in the sentence.

They are commonly placed in the front or end positions, but can also go in mid position.

A comma follows the marker in the front position, while at the end of a sentence it precedes the marker.

When in mid position commas are used before and after the attitude marker.

Clearly, there were too many issues to consider in the proposal.

I don't think he has a leg to stand on, **personally**.

The newspaper, **to be perfectly honest**, made a complete travesty of the situation.