

## LISTENING FOR SIGNPOST WORDS

In conversations, talks, discussions or lectures (the discourse forms used in the four sections of the IELTS listening test), speakers use words which help listeners understand the message being conveyed.

These words are called **linking signals** or **signpost words**. They are used to link or connect one idea with another, signal what is happening in a discourse, or show the direction in which a conversation, talk, discussion or lecture is heading.

### IELTS Tip

Listen out for signpost words in the listening tasks.

They can help you follow the conversations, discussions and lectures more easily, and help you understand and predict what the speaker is going to say next.

Signpost words also serve as clues which are helpful in identifying answers.

Recognising signpost words and using them to anticipate what a speaker will be doing next can help you follow the conversations and talks in the four listening passages more readily and identify answers more successfully. Practise using these signpost words in your conversations and discussions. Be careful though, because some signpost words are more appropriate for informal situations.

### Functions and signpost words

Signpost words have a range of functions. The most common functions and the most frequently used signpost words are examined below.

Beginning	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>open a talk, lecture</li> <li>take up a new topic</li> <li>re-open an interrupted conversation</li> <li>invite someone into a conversation</li> </ul>	OK, okay, now, right, well
<p><b>Example:</b> lecture  <b>Now</b>, are you all here? I suppose we should begin by looking at how to create a business plan.</p>	

Closing	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concluding a lecture, talk</li> <li>temporarily closing a topic</li> <li>finishing a topic or conversation</li> <li>showing you want to end a conversation</li> </ul>	so, OK, okay, right, anyway great, good, fine, lovely (more informal – conversations)
<p><b>Example:</b> conversation                      Jane: And we can get some flowers to take to the hospital.                      Bob: Yeah.                      Jane: Some roses.                      Bob: She loves roses.                      Jane: <b>Fine</b>.                      Bob: <b>Right</b>. I'll see you tonight.                      Jane: <b>Okay</b>. <b>Lovely</b>.</p>	



# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Gaining time (fillers)	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>indicating the speaker is thinking</li> <li>initiating a conversation</li> </ul>	you know, well, let me see, I mean, um, mmm, eh
<p><b>Example:</b> conversation, talk, discussion, lecture                  Well, I think planes are the safest form of transportation and, you know, it's the quickest way to get from A to B.</p>	

Summarising and generalising	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>leading into a summary of points</li> <li>generalising on what was previously said</li> </ul>	in conclusion, to conclude, to summarise, to sum up, overall (more formal choices) to sum up briefly, in a word, in all, in brief, altogether, in short, more generally, thus, then, in a nut shell
<p><b>Example:</b> discussion, lecture                  Was the experiment successful? In a word, no.</p>	

Reformulating ideas	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explaining ideas more clearly</li> <li>modifying ideas</li> <li>expressing things more clearly</li> <li>refining something that was said</li> </ul>	in other words, I mean, or rather, so to speak, in a manner of speaking, strictly speaking, well, that is to say (that's to say) to put it simply, to put it bluntly/to put it mildly (more informal)
<p><b>Example:</b> more formal expression                  Strictly speaking, a tomato is not a vegetable but a fruit.</p>	

Explaining, giving examples	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>giving an example</li> <li>expanding on a meaning</li> </ul>	for example, for instance, in other words, in particular, that is to say (that's to say), that is say (informal)
<p><b>Example:</b> conversation, talk, discussion, lecture                  There are many physical activities they can do after school. For example, they can play soccer, swim, ride their bikes, play tennis and even mow the lawn.</p>	

Resuming	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continuing after an interruption</li> <li>restating a diverted topic</li> </ul>	so, anyway, as I was saying, where was I?, what was I saying?, where were we? oh yes
<p><b>Example:</b> discussion                  A: More and more young people are being encouraged to take out private health insurance. The cost of providing free medical care for all is just too great for governments.                  B: Insurance these days is really expensive. I had to renew my insurance on an old car and it was almost double what I paid last year. House insurance wasn't any cheaper.                  A: As I was saying, young people and professionals in particular earning a good salary should be responsible for their own health cover.</p>	

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Changing the subject	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introducing a digression</li> <li>changing the topic</li> <li>diverting the subject</li> </ul>	incidentally, by the way, come to think of it, talking of ..., speaking of ..., that reminds me, oh
<b>Example:</b> conversation Speaking of movies, did you see that new film about vampires?	

Sequencing	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>indicating the order in which things occur</li> <li>signalling how one thing follows another</li> <li>organising</li> </ul>	A B C (using letters of the alphabet), and, and then, for a start, next, going back to, in general, afterwards, on top of that, in the first place, lastly (more commonly used in spoken language) first (firstly), first of all, second (secondly), finally, lastly
<b>Example:</b> discussion What we really need to discuss is A, the timing of junk food advertisements on TV and B, what we're going to do about it.	

Adding something	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adding to something that has been said previously</li> </ul>	also, again, besides, what is more (what's more), then, too, as well (as), further, on top of this/that, likewise (more commonly used in spoken language) in addition, additionally, further, furthermore, moreover, equally (more formal choices)
<b>Example:</b> conversation, talk, discussion, lecture Winning the trip to Europe was a dream come true but, on top of that we got two thousand dollars cash to spend.	

Contrasting	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>showing a difference between two or more people or things</li> <li>opposing</li> </ul>	instead, conversely, then, on the contrary, but, on the one hand ... on the other hand, alternatively, however, yet, although, though, unlike
<b>Example:</b> conversation, talk, discussion, lecture Travelling the world is always exciting but nothing can beat the joy of coming home.	

Concession	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>being prepared to accept part of an argument which has been stated earlier</li> <li>surprising or unexpected statement in light of what has been said earlier</li> </ul>	while, (al)though, however, nonetheless, nevertheless, notwithstanding, still, yet, in any case, at any rate, in spite of, despite that, at the same time, even if
<b>Example:</b> conversation, talk, discussion, lecture There's little chance Paul will be selected for the Olympic team. Nevertheless, we've got to be hopeful.	

# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Cause, reason, result, consequences	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expressing causes, effects, results, consequences</li> </ul>	accordingly, as a consequence, as a result, consequently, in light of this/that, therefore, hence, because, because of, due to, on account of, owing to
<b>Example:</b> conversation, talk, discussion, lecture Classes were cancelled <b>because of</b> the snowstorms.	

timing	
Function	Signpost words and phrases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>linking of events in time</li> </ul>	afterwards, meantime, in the mean time, meanwhile, eventually, subsequently, then, after that, then
<b>Example:</b> conversation, talk, discussion, lecture Your car can't be repaired until Monday but, <b>in the meantime</b> , we'll give you a courtesy vehicle.	

