



LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BULLETIN

Information and Tips from the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Programs

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SENTENCE STARTERS FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

All students must use the specialized features of language common to academic writing. After becoming familiar with process writing, students need to become aware of the characteristics of expository prose required for academic writing. This *Bulletin* addresses the most common sentence stems, or starters, as an efficient way to expand academic language for English language learners.

CATEGORIES OF STARTERS

Openings/Introductions

The central issue in X is Y...
The development of X is a common/typical problem...
X and Y are of particular interest and complexity...
For a long time, it has been the case that...
Most accounts/reports/publications claim/state/maintain that...
According to X, recent articles/reports/studies seem to be...
One of the most controversial/important/interesting issues/problems is Y...

Thesis/Topic Statements

The purpose of this essay/paper/analysis...

The main emphasis/focus/goal/purpose of this essay/paper/project is to...
This paper describes and analyzes...
This paper discusses/examines/investigates...
This paper shows/claims that...
This essay/paper addresses/examines/investigates...
My aim in this paper is to...
In this paper, I/we report on/discuss...
I intend/will demonstrate/show/explain/illustrate that...
My basis/main/most important argument/claim is largely/essentially that...

Secondary Purpose

In addition, it examines/discusses...
Additionally, Y is discussed/examined...
A secondary aim of this paper is to...
Another reason/point/issue addressed/discussed in this paper is...

Organization Statements

This paper (will) compare(s)/describes/illustrates X by analyzing/comparing/demonstrating Y... then by... and finally...
This paper first analyzes/discusses X, followed by an examination/overview of...

Assertion

*It can be claimed/said/assumed that X...
It seems certain/likely/doubtful that X...
I/we maintain that...*

Agreement with Author/Source

*As X perceptively/insightfully states/
correctly notes/rightly observes/appro-
priately points out...
I/we rather/somewhat strongly agree
with/support (the idea that) X provided
support to Y's argument/claim/conclusion
that...*

Disagreement with Author Series

*I/we rather/somewhat/strongly disagree
with X that Y...
As X states (somewhat) unclearly/errone-
ously...
X does not support Y's argument/claim/
conclusion about Z/that Z...
However, it remains unclear whether...
It would be of interest to learn more
about...*

Comparison

*Both X and Y are (quite) similar in that Z...
X is like/resembles Y...
Both X and Y have/share some aspects of
Z...
X is similar to/not unlike Y...*

Contrast

*X is (quite) different from Y...
X is not the case with Y...
X does not resemble Y...
X contrasts with Y...
X is unlike Y in that/with respect to...*

Recommendations

*Let me recommend/suggest that X be/
have/Y...
What I want/would like to recommend/
suggest is that X...
One suggestion is/may be that...*

Classification

X can/maybe divided/classified into Y...

*X and Y are categories/divisions of Z...
There are X categories/types/classes of
Y...*

Supporting Arguments, Claims, Conclusions, and Generalizations

*As proof/evidence/an example...
According to X...
As X says/claims...
X provides evidence/support for Y/that Y...
X demonstrates that Y...
X shows evidence that Y/for Y...
X is an illustration/example of Y...*

Citing Sources

*It is/has been (often) asserted/believed/
noted that...
It is believed that...
It is often asserted that...
It has been noted that...*

Generalization

*Overall... In general...
On the whole... Generally speaking...
In most cases... For the most part...
With the exception of X...
With one exception...*

Closing Statement

*In sum/conclusion...
To sum up/conclude...
To tie this (all) together...*

Advanced literacy means, in part, using textual conventions for specific effect and intention. The above stems are examples to help learners express themselves more accurately as emerging communicators in individual content areas.

SOURCES:

Hinkel, Eli (2004). Teaching Academic Writing. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Scarcella, Robin, "Some Key Factors Affecting English Learners' Development of Advanced Literacy." In Schleppegrell, Mary J. & Colombi, M. Cecelia (eds.) Developing Advanced Literacy in First and Second Languages. Mahwah, NJ: LEA, pp. 209-226.