Linking words and phrases

Linking words and phrases are used to make your writing flow. They connect and logically organise ideas in and across sentences and paragraphs. Creating this good flow makes it much easier to read and understand the ideas you are presenting in your assignment.

Table 1: Example linking words

Sequencing ideas	Firstly.. Secondly.. Finally..
The process of essay writing includes a number of steps. **Firstly**, it is important to understand the task question. **Secondly**, brainstorming around the topic is useful to identify possible ways of approaching the task.	
Adding information	Moreover.. In addition.. Furthermore..
When reading for an essay topic, students should keep the essay question in mind. By doing so, they can avoid reading irrelevant texts. **Moreover**, they can begin to formulate an opinion or position in relation to the essay question.	
Showing similarities/comparisons	Equally... Likewise... Similarly...
While reading for an essay, it is important that students take notes of relevant ideas using their own words. This will help with paraphrasing and demonstrating an understanding of the text. **Similarly**, it is important that students critically analyse these ideas to identify their relevance to the essay topic.	
Showing differences/contrasts	In contrast.. Conversely.. On the other hand..
When taking notes, there is no need use formal language. **In contrast**, when writing the essay itself, academic style is required.	
Showing alternative ideas/concessions	However.. Nonetheless.. Nevertheless..
In an essay, the writing should be formal and objective; **however,** the student's voice should still be evident.	
Clarifying	In other words.. That is..
In other words, the student needs to provide an opinion that is justifiable.	
Explaining in another way	That is.. In other words.. This means that..
This means that the student should avoid personal language, but at the same time show their perspective through the use of referenced support, and analysis of that support.	
Expressing results/cause and effect	Therefore.. Consequently.. As a result..
Therefore, it is clear that writing an essay involves the use of academically appropriate language and expressions.	
Giving illustrations/examples	For example.. To illustrate.. For instance..
For instance, rather than writing 'In my opinion..', it is more appropriate to write 'It is argued that...'.	

Concluding	In conclusion.. To conclude.. To summarise..
In conclusion, it is advised that students edit their essay thoroughly to ensure that it is academic and referenced appropriately.	

Activity

Which paragraph demonstrates a good flow of ideas? Can you identify the linking words/phrases and their purpose in that paragraph?

Paragraph A

Studying at university has a number of benefits. Students can build on their social networks. They can meet a range of people from diverse backgrounds. They can develop long-lasting friendships and enrich their social lives. During tutorial sessions, students can develop effective communication skills. They can learn to negotiate, collaborate and compromise. This is important for future professional contexts. Students can become critical thinkers and more open-minded about the world as they see it. They can learn how to develop arguments and support them with evidence from reliable sources. Students can become independent learners and learn to manage their time and workload effectively. When they graduate they will benefit from university.

Paragraph B

Studying at university has a number of benefits. To begin with, students can build on their social networks. By meeting a range of people from diverse backgrounds, they can develop long-lasting friendships, and enrich their social lives. Furthermore, during tutorial sessions, students can develop effective communication skills. Through this experience, they can learn to negotiate, collaborate and compromise. Students can also become critical thinkers and become more open-minded about the world as they see it. In addition, they can learn how to develop arguments and support them with evidence from reliable sources. Other skills include independent learning, as well as time and workload management. With the ideas presented above, it can therefore be suggested that university attendance can play a vital role in both social and professional skill development.

Answer

Paragraph B reads more smoothly because it uses linking words and phrases to link ideas across and within the paragraph. Paragraph A on the other hand does not flow so well – the language is a bit robotic in expression, unnecessarily repetitive and the logical organisation of ideas is not clear.

The linking words and phrases in paragraph B are highlighted below. The purpose of each one is described in the right-hand box to the side.

Studying at university has a number of benefits. ***To begin with***, students can build on their social networks. By meeting a range of people from diverse backgrounds, they can develop long-lasting friendships, and enrich their social lives. ***Furthermore***, during tutorial sessions, students can develop effective communication skills. ***Through this experience***, they can learn to negotiate, collaborate and compromise. Students can ***also*** become critical thinkers ***and*** more open-minded about the world as they see it. ***In addition***, they can learn how to develop arguments and support them with evidence from reliable sources. ***Other skills*** include independent learning, ***as well as*** time and workload management. ***With the ideas presented above***, it can therefore be suggested that university attendance can play a vital role in both social and professional skill development.	**Sequencing** - To begin with.... **Adding more ideas** - furthermore... - also... - in addition.... - and.... - other skills.... - as well as.... **Connecting ideas** - Through this experience.... - With the ideas presented above....