

## Signal Words and Verb Tense

Signal words help you to put in the correct tense. You can easily put in the correct form of the verb if you know the signal word and which tense it demands.

| signal word     | tense               |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| every ... (day) | Simple Present      |
| sometimes       |                     |
| often           |                     |
| usually         |                     |
| seldom          |                     |
| now             | Present Progressive |
| at the moment   |                     |
| Look!           |                     |
| Listen!         |                     |
| last ...        | Simple Past         |
| ... ago         |                     |
| yesterday       |                     |
| in 1990         |                     |
| yet             | Present Perfect     |
| ever            |                     |
| already         |                     |

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| so far    |  |
| up to now |  |

## Signal Words

In order to be able to lead your reader in the direction you want to go, you will have to use strong transitions in your writing. You can do that in several ways: by using entire sentences to connect one thought to another, entire paragraphs to give more background information, or simply a word or two to indicate your intentions.

This list of signal words is from *The New Reading Teacher's Book of Lists*, 1985 Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. By E. Fry, D. Fountoukidis, and J. Polk.

### 1. Continuation Signals (Warning—there are more ideas to come):

|              |                |             |             |             |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| and          | also           | another     | again       | and finally |
| first of all | a final reason | furthermore | in addition | last of all |
| moreover     | likewise       | more        | with        | next        |
| one reason   | other          | secondly    | similarly   | too         |

### 2. Change-of-direction signals (Watch out—we're doubling back):

|              |           |              |                 |                   |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| although     | but       | conversely   | despite         | different from    |
| even though  | however   | in contrast  | instead of      | in spite of       |
| nevertheless | otherwise | the opposite | on the contrary | on the other hand |
| rather       | still     | yet          | while           | though            |

### 3. Sequence signals (There is an order to these ideas):

|                           |         |                    |               |         |
|---------------------------|---------|--------------------|---------------|---------|
| first, second, third      | A, B, C | in the first place | for one thing | then    |
| next                      | before  | now                | after         | while   |
| into (far into the night) | until   | last               | during        | since   |
| always                    | o'clock | on time            | later         | earlier |

**4. Illustration signals (Here's what that idea means in reality):**

|             |                    |              |               |         |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|---------|
| for example | specifically       | for instance | to illustrate | such as |
| much like   | in the same way as | similar to   |               |         |

**5. Emphasis signals (This is important):**

|                            |                        |                         |                      |                             |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| a major development        | it all boils down to   | a significant factor    | most of all          | a primary concern           |
| most noteworthy            | key feature            | more than anything else | a major event        | pay particular attention to |
| a vital force              | remember that          | a central issue         | should be noted      | a distinctive quality       |
| the most substantial issue | above all              | the main value          | especially important | the basic concept           |
| especially relevant        | the crux of the matter | especially valuable     | the chief outcome    | important to note           |
| the principal item         |                        |                         |                      |                             |

**6. Cause, condition, or result signals (Condition or modification coming up):**

|         |    |    |     |      |
|---------|----|----|-----|------|
| because | if | of | for | from |
|---------|----|----|-----|------|

|         |                |              |         |               |
|---------|----------------|--------------|---------|---------------|
| so      | while          | then         | but     | that          |
| until   | since          | as           | whether | in order that |
| so that | therefore      | unless       | yet     | thus          |
| due to  | resulting from | consequently |         |               |

**7. Spatial signals (Answers the “where” question):**

|         |          |           |             |        |
|---------|----------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| between | on       | by        | here        | there  |
| left    | right    | these     | close to    | near   |
| this    | side     | middle    | west        | beside |
| east    | about    | north     | south       | around |
| over    | under    | away      | in front of | across |
| into    | behind   | toward    | beyond      | above  |
| below   | opposite | upon      | outside     | upon   |
| next to | inside   | alongside | over        | out    |
| far     | in       | adjacent  | near        |        |

**8. Comparison-contrast signals (We will now compare idea A with idea B):**

|         |        |              |           |                |
|---------|--------|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| and     | or     | also         | too       | best           |
| most    | either | less         | less than | more than      |
| same    | better | even         | then      | half           |
| much as | like   | analogous to | but       | different from |
| still   | yet    | however      | although  | opposite       |
| rather  | while  | though       |           |                |

**9. Conclusion signals (This ends the discussion and may have special importance):**

|             |              |             |                  |               |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| as a result | consequently | finally     | from this we see | in conclusion |
| in summary  | hence        | last of all | therefore        |               |

**10. Fuzz signals (Idea not exact, or author not positive and wishes to qualify a statement):**

|         |          |            |              |           |
|---------|----------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| almost  | if       | looks like | maybe        | could     |
| some    | except   | should     | alleged      | nearly    |
| might   | reputed  | seems like | was reported | purported |
| sort of | probably | possibly   |              |           |

**11. Non-word emphasis signals**

|                          |                       |                         |                                |                                      |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| exclamation point (!)    | <u>underline</u>      | <i>italics</i>          | <b>bold type</b>               | subheads, like <u>The Conclusion</u> |
| indentation of paragraph | graphic illustrations | numbered points (1,2,3) | very short sentence: Stop War. | “quotation marks”                    |