

Metadiscourse

What is Metadiscourse?

Metadiscourse is the language we use when we refer to our own thinking and writing, the structure or identity of our paper, or to our reader's thinking, as we write. Simply put, metadiscourse is writing about writing.

Common phrases of metadiscourse:

- This paper will address...
- I found that...
- It is clear that...
- As mentioned earlier...
- In conclusion...
- Notice that...
- I believe/think/feel that...
- As a matter of fact...
- In other words...
- First/Second/Finally...
- To summarize...
- One must understand that...

So What's the Big Deal?

Metadiscourse can be undesirable for two key reasons:

- 1) It is unnecessary.
- 2) It distracts readers from the text's main message.

COMPARE!

In this paper I will show how exercise greatly influences a person's ability to handle stress.

-Vs.-

Exercise greatly influences a person's ability to handle stress.

In conclusion, the research I studied shows that seatbelts are the most important survival factor in car crashes.

-Vs.-

Seatbelts are the most important survival factor in car crashes.

Is Metadiscourse Ever Helpful?

Yes. Here are some benefits of using metadiscourse:

- Structural phrases such as *most importantly* and *for example*, and can help bring organization to our writing.
- Similarly, transitions often become smoother with phrases such as *on the other hand*.
- Metadiscourse can add voice to our writing with words such as *amazingly*, *surprisingly*, or *despite*.

So What Should We Do?

Try to be AWARE and INTENTIONAL as you use metadiscourse. In general, your writing will be more effective if you keep metadiscourse to a minimum. If you do use it, stick with forms similar to those listed as helpful.