WRITING CENTER
Academic Enrichment & Support Center

Avoiding Metadiscourse

What is Metadiscourse?

Metadiscourse is the language we use when we refer to <u>our own thinking and writing</u>, <u>the structure or identity of our paper</u>, or to <u>our reader's thinking</u>, 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* 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.