

Learning together

Discourse Markers: Other Clues That Help Me Understand!

ACTIVITY #12

SEQUENCE: READING STRATEGIES
3RD CYCLE — PRIMARY

By **Laurence Arcouette**,
Educational Specialist, for Institut TA



Purpose of the activity

In a text, you will of course find the author's ideas. But the text is also structured and organized in a specific way to make it easier to understand.

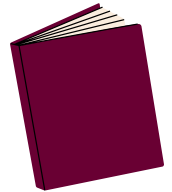


Relevance of the activity

Identifying and understanding the elements that structure a text helps improve comprehension.



Supplies



- Text used in the activity example (see Appendix)
- Reference sheet of transition words and their meanings (see Appendix)

To complete this activity, you can also use:

- texts your child has to read for school;
- a book that matches your child's reading level.

LET'S GO!

What?



Today, we are learning to identify **transition words** to make connections between different pieces of information in the text.

Why?



Authors guide us in several ways in a text. They use **subheadings**, add **images**, and also include **transition words** (*and, because of, because, but, since, also, etc.*). When we identify them and understand their meaning, they help us follow the flow of the text and better understand what we read.

When?



While reading an informational text, this strategy helps organize information in your mind and remember it better.

How?

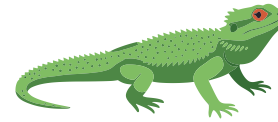


After reading a text, you should be able to:

- remember the main ideas;
- understand what the author wants to tell us; and,
- make a plan in your head about what you read.

Discourse markers can give you clues about what the author is doing in the text and about its organization. Let me explain: Discourse markers can help you follow the thread of the text. Authors often use them to move from one point to another!

Let's look at an example together (see the text in the Appendix):
Read the text in the Appendix with your child.



In my first paragraph, **"first and foremost"** marks the beginning of the explanations. A first piece of information is introduced, that *reptiles are animals whose skin is covered with scales*. By noting this discourse marker, I can easily identify the information to remember (while I'm reading or after I've finished). Later in the paragraph, **"second"** tells me that the author is carrying on; the author is adding information, such as the comment that *reptiles are different from mammals*.

Discourse markers can also help us understand the author's intentions, for example if they want to make a comparison, contrast information or highlight a cause-and-effect relationship.

Let's look at an example together (see the text in the Appendix):

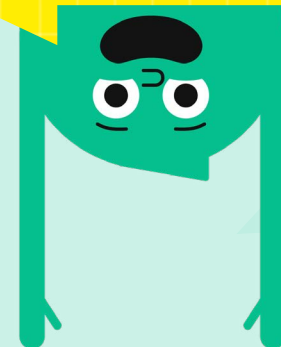
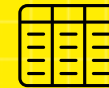


At the end of my first paragraph, **"that's why"** highlights a relationship between two pieces of information. Here, the author wants to help me understand that *because their temperature can change with the temperature of the air around them, they can live in very hot places*. Further on, **"however"** serves to mark an opposition, that *this way of living* (being able to change its temperature) *also has its problems*.

You can now practise this strategy using a book that matches your child's reading level.

Don't forget!

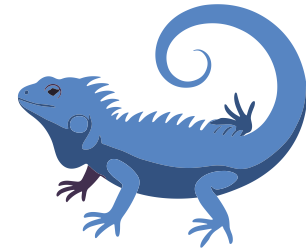
To make it easier to understand a text using transition words, you need to be familiar with their meaning. I invite you to refer to the reference chart of transition words and their meanings (see Appendix).



Example text:

First and foremost, reptiles are animals whose skin is covered with scales. This special skin helps them retain their water and not become dehydrated, especially in very dry places. **Second**, they are different from mammals, because their temperature can change with the temperature of the air around them. **That's why** they can live in very hot places without using too much energy to stay at the right temperature.

However, this way of living also has its problems. When it is cold, reptiles must find a place to hide and stay warm, otherwise they cannot move much. **In addition**, some reptiles lay eggs and others give birth directly to babies. **As a result**, this variety in their reproduction modes allows them to better adapt to various environments. Reptiles are very interesting and important in nature. They show us how animals can adapt in surprising ways to live in their habitats.



Reference sheet of transition words and their meanings

Type of relationship or link	Examples of relationship markers
Addition	and, in addition, as well as
Cause	because of, due to, since
Consequence	so, then, that's why
Opposition	but, on the other hand, while
Explanation	that is why, for example, in fact
Comparison	like, less than, too
Time	after, when, while
Introduction	at first, firstly, first of all
Continuation	then, after, following that
End	finally, lastly, in conclusion