Discourse markers are expressions that are used to show how discourse is constructed. They can show the connection between what a speaker is saying and what has already been said or what is going to be said; they can help to make clear the structure of what is being said; they can indicate what speakers think about what they are saying or what others have said.

There are a very large number of these discourse markers, and it is impossible to give a complete list. Here are a few of the most common. Some of these words and expressions have more than one use; for more information, look in a good dictionary. Some discourse markers are used mostly in informal speech or writing; others are more common in a formal style.

- Focusing and linking
- Balancing contrasting points
- Emphasizing a contrast
- Similarity
- Concession and counter-argument
- Contradicting
- Dismissal of previous discourse
- Change of subject
- Return to previous subject
- Structuring
- Adding
- Generalizing
- Giving examples
- Logical consequences
- Making things clear; giving details
- Softening and correcting
- Gaining time
- Showing one’s attitude to what one is saying
- Persuading
- Referring to the other person’s expectations
- Summing up

**Focusing and linking**

These expressions focus attention on what is going to be said, by announcing the subject in advance. Some of them also make a link with previous discourse, by referring back to what
was said before.

with reference to
talking/speaking of/about
regarding
as regards
as far as □ is concerned
as for

Balancing contrasting points

These expressions are used to balance two facts or ideas that contrast, but do not contradict each other.

on the other hand
while
whereas

Emphasizing a contrast

however
nevertheless
mind you
still
yet
in spite of this

Similarity

similarly
in the same way

Concession and counter-argument

These expressions are used in a three-part structure:

1. the speaker/writer mentions facts that point in a certain direction,
2. it is agreed (the concession) that a particular contradictory fact points the other way,
3. but the speaker/writer dismisses this and returns to the original direction of
argument.

**concession:**
- it is true
- of course
- certainly
- if
- may

**counter-argument:**
- however
- even so
- but
- nevertheless
- nonetheless
- all the same
- stil

Contradicting

- on the contrary

Dismissal of previous discourse

- anyway
- anyhow
- at any rate
- at least

Change of subject

- by the way
- incidentally
- right
- all right
- now
- OK

Return to previous subject

- as I was saying

Structuring
first(ly)
first of all
second(ly)
third(ly)
lastly
finally
to begin with
to start with
in the first/second/third place
for one thing
for another thing

moreover (very formal)
furthermore (formal)
in addition
as well as that
on top of that (informal)
another thing is
what is more
besides
in any case

on the whole
in general
in all/most/many/some cases
broadly speaking
by and large
to a great extent
to some extent
apart from □
except for □

for instance
for example
in particular

These expressions show that what is said
follows logically from what was said before.

therefore (formal)
as a result (formal)
consequently (formal)
so
then

Making things clear; giving details

I mean
actually
that is to say
in other words

Softening and correcting

I think
I feel
I reckon (informal)
I guess (American)
in my view/opinion (formal)
apparently
so to speak
more or less
sort of (informal)
kinds of (informal)
well
really
that is to say
at least
I’m afraid
I suppose
or rather
actually
I mean

Gaining time

let me see
let’s see
well
you know
I don’t know
I mean
kind of
sort of

Showing one’s attitude to what one is saying

honestly
frankly
no doubt

Persuading

after all
look
look here
no doubt

Referring to the other person’s expectations

These expressions are used when we show whether somebody’s expectations have been fulfilled or not.

actually
in fact
as a matter of fact
to tell the truth
well

Summing up

in conclusion
to sum up
briefly
in short