The Oxford Phrasal Academic Lexicon™

The Oxford Phrasal Academic Lexicon (OPAL) is a set of four word lists that together provide an essential guide to the most important words and phrases to know in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). This list gives around 370 important phrases for academic writing, grouped into 15 functional areas.

Written phrases

1. Specifying topics and relations between ideas
   - in terms of
   - in relation to
   - in/within the context of
   - with regard to
   - related to
   - relating to
   - the relationship between
   - as to
   - concerned with
   - linked to
   - relevant to
   - in accordance with
   - in respect of
   - from the point of view of
   - from the perspective of
   - focus on
   - in particular
   - in question
   - as part of
   - the question of (whether or not)
   - the concept of
   - the idea of
   - the notion of
   - the problem of
   - the issue of
   - the idea that
   - in the field of
   - in the area of
   - in the study of
   - our understanding of
   - an understanding of
   - a better understanding of
   - the assumption that
   - the aim/purpose of this study/chapter/article
   - beyond the scope of (this book/article/chapter)
   - will be discussed in more detail

2. Drawing attention to something or focusing on it
   - it is important (to)
   - it should be noted that
   - it is important to note that
   - it is interesting to note that
   - it is worth noting that
   - it is important to remember that
   - it is important to realize that
   - it is important to understand
   - it is important to recognize/be aware of/
   - bear in mind
   - in the case of
   - in this case
   - the importance of
   - (one of) the most important
   - it is not surprising that
   - the need for/to
   - there is a need for/to
   - the significance of
   - it is necessary to
   - it is useful to
   - (to) take into account
   - (to/should/need to) be taken into account
   - to take account of
   - to be aware of
   - it is difficult to
   - the purposes of
   - the benefits of
   - (to) note that
   - an important role in
   - at the heart of
   - if and only if
   - in fact

3. Hedging and expressing degrees of certainty
   - it may be
   - appears to be
   - does not appear to be
   - seems to be
   - it could/can be argued that
   - argue(s) that
   - held that
   - claim that
   - it is (not) possible to/that
   - it is impossible to
   - it may be possible to
   - the possibility of
   - the probability of
   - the likelihood of
   - the potential for
   - has/have the potential to
   - based on the assumption that
   - the view that
   - considered to be
   - to suggest that
   - it is clear that
   - it is not clear
   - (this) is not to say/suggest that
   - there is no reason to
   - there is no doubt that
   - it is difficult to see (how)
   - as a whole
   - assume that
   - it is reasonable to assume that
   - it is fair to say that
   - more or less
   - in general
   - is/are likely to be
   - is/are/were more likely to (be)
   - (are) less likely to
   - is/are likely to
   - it is likely that
   - be expected to

4. Explaining and defining
   - in other words
   - (is) (often) referred to as
   - refer(s) to
   - this means that
   - this does not mean that
   - in the sense that/of
   - in this way
   - in such a way (that)
   - in a way that
   - (as) a way of
   - (be) regarded as
   - (can) be thought of as
   - the definition of
   - is defined as
   - to account for
   - reasons for
   - the reason for this is that
   - it is for this reason that
   - for a number of reasons
   - can be described/explained in terms of
5. Giving examples or presenting evidence

such as for example
for instance as in
as shown in according to
is/are shown in can be seen (as/in)
it can be seen that as we have seen
it is easy to see that (is) an example of
is a good example of show(s) that
indicate(s) that has/have been shown to (be)
it can be shown that it has been shown that
have shown that evidence of/that/for
data on research on support for
it has been suggested that it has been argued that
in some cases (by/from) the fact that
are based on basis for
can be found in found that
it can be seen that as we have seen
as we shall see it is easy to see that
(as) an example of
show(s) that
indicate(s) that has/have been shown to (be)

6. Expressing aims, causes and effects

in order to the way(s) in which
so that the manner in which
(be/is) due to is based on
may be due to on the basis of that
(by) due to the fact that (is/are/be) associated with
as a result of association between
result(s) in involved in
because of responsible for
created by to ensure that
the cause(s) of tend(s) to be
the effect(s) of give rise to
the/an effect(s) on by means of
the impact of lead(s) to
as a result of can/may lead to
in the light of so as to
it is easy to see that such that
it is easy to see that a change in
the cause(s) of consistent with
the effect(s) of (as) a consequence of
the/an effect(s) on the consequences of

7. Making contrasts

rather than difference(s) in
as opposed to a number of different
in contrast different from
in contrast variation in
on the other hand whether or not
the difference between this is not the case
on the one hand not necessarily

8. Comparing

compared with/to in much the same way (as)
relative to similar to (that of)
in the same way (as/that) consistent with

9. Adding

as well as in addition
as well (not only) but also

10. Expressing quantity/degree and increase/decrease

the/a number of increase in the number of
there are a number of a/the (wide) range of
the amount of in the range of
the level of a large number of
a high level of a small number of
the rate of an/the increase in

the extent of
the extent to which
to the extent that
the size of
the growth of
the rise of
high levels of

a series of
the most common
is equal to
a measure of
the percentage of
the proportion of
the ratio of

the total number of
the frequency of
the prevalence of
one or more of
by a factor of
is a measure of
in part

d of the total
to a greater or lesser extent
to a greater or lesser extent
more/greater/higher/less/
lower than

11. Expressing the existence/non-existence of something

in the presence of
the existence of
in the past
in recent years

(even) in the absence of (any)
the lack of
the absence of
the absence of
prior to

the presence or absence of
the majority of

the vast majority of

2. Referring to the text and to other texts

in the course of
in this study
in the study
the following

as follows
the above
the former/latter
the work of

in this chapter
of this study
in the previous/next section

in the literature
et al
at the beginning of

13. Referring to time

in the future
in recent years

in the past
prior to

(over) a period of time
over time
in turn

14. Phrases with (the) (noun) of

(by/with) the use of
(in) the development of
the role of
the nature of
the basis of
the form of
the value(s) of
in the process of

the risk of
(as/is) a function of
the quality of
the study of
the application of
the formation of
the ability to of
the evolution of

the creation of
the distribution of
the emergence of
the meaning of
the principle of
the introduction of
the analysis of
the effectiveness of

the performance of
the implementation of
the availability of
the content of
aspect(s) of
characteristics of
feature(s) of
elements of

15. Miscellaneous

his or her
he or she

men and women

OPAL has been created with reference to the following corpora: the Oxford Corpus of Academic English (OCAE), the fiction subcorpus of the Oxford English Corpus (OEC), the spoken element of the British National Corpus (BNC) and a subset of the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus, developed within the University of Warwick and for which relevant permissions have been obtained. BASE was developed at the Universities of Warwick and Reading under the directorship of Hilary Nesi and Paul Thompson. Corpus development of BASE was assisted by funding from BALEP, EURALEX, the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.