



Critical Signposting

Study Development Worksheet

These words can be used to subtly guide your reader through your argument when referring to sources, theories and other arguments. Using these words will increase your academic vocabulary and the criticality of your work. Ensure that you have fully understood the meaning of the words to use them correctly in a sentence.

The following words and phrases have positive connotations:

- Advantage:** A condition giving a greater chance of success.
'One advantage of this perspective is...'
- Astute:** Clever and quick to see how to take advantage of a situation.
'Smith is an astute observer of human behaviour.'
- Accurate:** Correct, exact, and without any mistakes.
'Smith gives an accurate representation of this theory in practice.'
- Constructive:** If advice, criticism or actions are constructive, they are useful and intended to help or improve something.
'She criticised my writing, but in a way that was very constructive.'
- In congruence:** In agreement of opinion.
'Smith, in congruence with Jones....'
- Convincing:** Able to make you believe that something is true or right
'A convincing argument/explanation.'
- Discerning:** Showing good judgment, especially about style and quality.
- Insightfully:** (The ability to have) a clear, deep and sometimes sudden understanding of a complicated problem or situation.
'As Smith insightfully comments....'
- Interesting:** Someone or something that is interesting keeps your attention because they are unusual, exciting, or have a lot of ideas.
'Smith offers an interesting perspective on....'



Notably: To an important degree, or in a way which can or should be noticed.
'The newspapers are notably biased.'

Persuasive: Making you want to do or believe a particular thing.
'The argument is persuasive.'

Useful: Effective; helping you to do or achieve something
'Smith offers a useful perspective on.....'

Valuable: Worthy, to be prized.
'Smith gives a valuable insight into...'

The following words and phrases have negative or critical associations:

Adversely: Having a negative or harmful effect on something.
'They received a lot of adverse publicity about the changes.'

Conflicting: Describes beliefs, needs, facts, etc. that are different and opposing.
'A conflicting argument to the one put forward by Smith is.....'

Contrary to... Saying or showing the opposite.
'Contrary to the majority of literature on this subject, Jones argues.....'

Controversial: Causing disagreement or discussion.
'a controversial issue/decision/speech/figure.'

Contradictory: If two or more facts, pieces of advice, etc. are contradictory, they are very different from each other.

Disadvantage: A condition or situation which causes problems, especially one which causes something or someone to be less successful than other things or people.

Inconsistent: If a reason, idea, opinion, etc. is inconsistent, different parts of it do not agree, or it does not agree with something else.

Incongruous: Unusual or different from what is around or from what is generally happening.



A limitation of...: If someone or something has limitations, they are not as good as they could be.

Paradoxically: A situation or statement which seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics.

Undiscerning: Lacking good judgement.
'In an undiscerning way...'

Weakness: An inadequate quality; fault
'A key weakness of this theory is that it does not function well in practice.'

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