



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Signal Words in Reading

Good writers include transition or linking words to clarify details, and good readers pay attention to those transition words. Like traffic signals, transitions offer direction: *keep going, turn around, stop and take note*, and so on.

Emphasis: most important, the chief reason, especially noteworthy, a key element, the primary concern
The reader should pay special attention to the ideas that these words signal. The writer wants the reader to remember these ideas.

Addition: first, second, third, next, one more, another, in addition, also, finally, last

Look for a list of two or more items.

Comparison: similarly, just as, like
This will help you to see how two items match.

Contrast: different, yet, but, however, in contrast, on the other hand, even though

This will help you see how two items differ; it also alerts you to a change of direction.

Cause/Effect: because, since, as a result, consequently, therefore, thus
You should look for a cause and the results that follow. Sometimes the results come first and the cause follows.

Example: for example, such as, to illustrate, for instance

You should look for a specific example following a general statement or concept, clarifying what has been said.

Reading Nonfiction

Description: This writing focuses on the senses.

You should look for a general topic, complete with references to sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and/or smell.

A graphic organizer to keep track of this writing might be a chart with a column for each sense, under which students could list details.

Chronological Order: This type of writing lists events according to time order. You should look for words that indicate the order in which events happened: first, later, then, next, soon, before, after, finally, last. Creating a time line would be an effective way for students to keep track of what took place, and when it happened.

Spatial Order: This type of writing describes an object or place according to the location of its parts.

You should be on the alert for various elements signaled by words such as in front of, behind, next to, along side, on top of, under.

A describing web, with spoke and circles radiating from a central hub, would allow students to keep track of the details.

Comparison/Contrast: This type of writing tells how two or more topics are the same and/or different.

One way to arrange this type of writing is to list the characteristics of topic one, followed by the characteristics of topic two, ending with a statement of what both topics share.

Using a Venn diagram is an easy way to visualize the similarities and differences.

Encourage your students to try different approaches to keeping track of the details of their nonfiction reading.