

Speaking/talking of/about ... is used to make a link with what has just been said. It can help a speaker to change the subject.

I saw Max and Lucy today. You know, she –~ Talking of Max, did you know he's going to Australia?

Regarding can come at the beginning of a piece of discourse.

Hello, John. Now look, regarding those sales figures – I really don't think ... As regards and as far as ... is concerned usually announce a change of subject by the speaker/writer.

... there are no problems about production. Now as regards marketing ...
... about production. As far as marketing is concerned, I think ...

People sometimes leave out *is concerned* after *as far as* ... This is usually considered incorrect.

As far as the new development plan, I think we ought to be very careful.
As for often suggests lack of interest or dislike.

I've invited Andy and Bob. As for Stephen, I never want to see him again.

2 balancing contrasting points

□ *on the one hand* (formal), *on the other hand*; *while*; *whereas*

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

Arranged marriages are common in many Middle Eastern countries. In the West, on the other hand, they are unusual.

On the one hand, we need to reduce costs. On the other hand, investment ...
I like the mountains, while/whereas my wife prefers the seaside.

While and *whereas* can be put before the first of the contrasting points.

While/Whereas some languages have 30 or more different vowel sounds, others have five or less.

For a comparison of *on the other hand* and *on the contrary*, see 144.

3 emphasising a contrast

□ *however*; *nevertheless*; *nonetheless*; *mind you*; *still*; *yet*; *in spite of this/that*; *despite this/that*

However, *nevertheless* and *nonetheless* emphasise the fact that the second point contrasts with the first. *Nevertheless* is very formal.

Britain came last in the World Children's Games. However, we did have one success, with Annie Smith's world record in the sack race.

It was an oppressive dictatorship, but nevertheless it ensured stability.

Mind you (less formal) and *still* introduce the contrasting point as an afterthought.

I don't like the job much. Mind you / Still, the money's OK.

Yet, still, in spite of this/that and *despite this/that* (more formal) can be used to suggest that something is surprising, in view of what was said before.

He says he's a socialist, and yet he owns three houses and drives a Rolls.

The train was an hour late. In spite of this, I managed to get to the meeting in time. (OR ... I still managed to get ...)

4 similarity

- *similarly; in the same way; just as*

These are most common in a formal style.

The roads are usually very crowded at the beginning of the holiday season.

Similarly, there are often serious traffic jams at the end of the holidays.

James Carter did everything he could to educate his children. In the same way, they in turn put a high value on their own children's education.

Just as the Greeks looked down on the Romans, the Romans looked down on their uncivilised neighbours.

5 concession and counter-argument

- *concession: it is true; certainly; of course; granted; if; may; stressed auxiliaries.*
- *counter-argument: however; even so; but; nevertheless; nonetheless; all the same; still*

These expressions are used in a three-part structure: (1) there is discussion of 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.

... cannot agree with colonialism. It is true that the British may have done some good in India. Even so, colonialism is basically evil.

... incapable of lasting relationships with women. Certainly, several women loved him, and he was married twice. All the same, the women closest to him were invariably deeply unhappy.

Very few people understood Einstein's theory. Of course, everybody had heard of him, and a fair number of people knew the word 'relativity'. But hardly anybody could tell you what he had actually said.

I'm not impressed by her work. Granted, she writes like an angel. But she doesn't write about anything of any interest.

It was a successful party. The Scottish cousins, if a little surprised by the family's behaviour, were nonetheless impressed by the friendly welcome they received.

I'm glad to have a place of my own. It's true it's a bit small, and it's a long way from the centre, and it does need a lot of repairs done. Still, it's home.

For other uses of *still*, see 566.

For other uses of *of course*, see 390.

6 contradicting

- *on the contrary; quite the opposite*

These expressions can contradict a suggestion made by another speaker.

Interesting lecture? ~ On the contrary / Quite the opposite, it was a complete waste of time.

They can also be used when a speaker/writer strengthens a negative statement which he/she has just made.

She did not allow the accident to discourage her. On the contrary / Quite the opposite, she began to work twice as hard.

For a comparison of *on the contrary* and *on the other hand*, see 144.

7 dismissal of previous discourse

- *at least; anyway; anyhow; at any rate; in any case*

At least can suggest that one thing is certain or all right, even if everything else is unsatisfactory.

The car's completely smashed up – I don't know what we're going to do.

At least nobody was hurt.

The other four expressions are used (mostly informally) to mean 'What was said before doesn't matter – the main point is as follows'.

I'm not sure what time I'll arrive, maybe seven or eight. Anyway / Anyhow /

At any rate / In any case, I'll certainly be there before eight thirty.

Note that *anyway* is not the same as *in any way*, which means 'by any method'.

Can I help you in any way?

8 change of subject

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

By the way and *incidentally* are used to introduce something one has just thought of that is not directly part of the conversation.

I was talking to Phil yesterday. Oh, by the way, he sends you his regards.

Well, he thinks . . .

Janet wants to talk to you about advertising. Incidentally, she's lost a lot of weight. Anyway, it seems the budget . . .

These two expressions are sometimes used to change the subject completely.

Freddy's had another crash. ~ Oh, yes? Poor old chap. By the way, have you heard from Joan recently?

Lovely sunset. ~ Yes, isn't it? Oh, incidentally, what happened to that bike I lent you?

(All) *right, now* and *OK* are often used informally by teachers, lecturers and people giving instructions, to indicate that a new section of the discourse is starting.

Any questions? Right, let's have a word about tomorrow's arrangements.

Now, I'd like to say something about the exam . . .

Is that all clear? OK, now has anybody ever wondered why it's impossible to tickle yourself? . . .

9 return to previous subject

- *to return to the previous point* (formal); *as I was saying* (informal)

These expressions are used to return to an earlier subject after an interruption or a brief change of subject.

. . . especially in France. To return to the previous point, non-European historians . . .

. . . on the roof – Jeremy, put the cat down, please. As I was saying, if Jack gets up on the roof and looks at the tiles . . .

10 structuring

- *first(ly), first of all, second(ly), third(ly)* etc; *lastly; finally; to begin with; to start with; in the first/second/third place; for one thing* (informal); *for another thing* (informal) ▶

We use these to show the structure of what we are saying.

First(ly), we need somewhere to live. Second(ly), we need to find work.

There are three reasons why I don't want to dance with you. To start with, my feet hurt. For another thing, you can't dance. And lastly, ...

Firstly, secondly etc are more formal than *first, second* etc.

For *at first*, see 84.

For *at last*, see 204.

11 adding

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

These expressions introduce additional information or arguments.

The Prime Minister is unwilling to admit that he can ever be mistaken.

Moreover, he is totally incapable ...

The peasants are desperately short of food. Furthermore / In addition, they urgently need doctors and medical supplies.

She borrowed my bike and never gave it back. And as well as that / on top of that / what is more, she broke the lawnmower and then pretended she hadn't.

If Janet and Pete come and stay, where's Mary going to sleep? Another thing is, we can't go away next weekend if they're here.

Her father was out of work. Also, her mother was in poor health.

Besides and *in any case* can add an extra, more conclusive fact or argument.

What are you trying to get a job as a secretary for? You'd never manage to work eight hours a day. Besides / In any case, you can't type.

12 generalising

- *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 ...*

These expressions say how far the speaker/writer thinks a generalisation is true.

On the whole, I had a happy childhood.

In general, we are satisfied with the work.

In most cases, people will be nice to you if you are nice to them.

Broadly speaking, teachers are overworked and underpaid.

By and large, this is a pleasant place to live.

To a great extent, a person's character is formed by the age of eight.

Apart from and *except for* (see 102) introduce exceptions to generalisations.

Apart from the soup, I thought the meal was excellent.

Except for Sally, they all seemed pretty sensible.

13 giving examples

- *for instance*; *for example*; *e.g.*; *in particular*

These expressions introduce particular examples to illustrate what has been said.

People often behave strangely when they're abroad. Take Mrs Ellis, for example / for instance, ...

In writing, the abbreviation *e.g.* (Latin *exempli gratia*), pronounced /i: 'dʒi:/, is often used to mean 'for example'.

Some common minerals, e.g. silica or olivine, ...

In particular focuses on a special example.

We are not at all happy with the work you did on the new kitchen. In particular, we consider that the quality of wood used ...

14 logical consequence

□ *therefore* (formal); *as a result* (formal); *consequently* (formal); *so*; *then*

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

She was therefore unable to avoid an unwelcome marriage.

So she had to get married to a man she didn't like.

The last bus has gone. ~ Then we're going to have to walk.

Therefore is used in logical, mathematical and scientific proofs.

Therefore $2x - 15 = 17y + 6$.

So is often used as a general-purpose connector, rather like *and*, in speech.

So anyway, this man came up to me and said 'Have you got a light?'

So I told him no, I hadn't. So he looked at me and ...

For the difference between *so* and *then*, see 537.

15 making things clear; giving details

□ *I mean*; *actually*; *that is to say*; *in other words*

We use *I mean* (see 348) when we make things clearer or give more details.

It was a terrible evening. I mean, they all sat round and talked politics.

Actually (see 11) can introduce details, especially when these are unexpected.

Tommy's really stupid. He actually still believes in Father Christmas.

That is to say and *in other words* are used when the speaker/writer says something again in another way.

We cannot continue with the deal on this basis. That is to say / In other words, unless you can bring down the price we shall have to cancel the order.

16 softening and correcting

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

I think/feel/reckon/guess and *in my view/opinion* are used to make opinions and statements sound less dogmatic – they suggest that the speaker is just giving a personal opinion, with which other people may disagree.

I think you ought to try again.

I really feel she's making a mistake.

I reckon/guess she just doesn't respect you, Bill.

In my view/opinion, it would be better to wait until July.

Apparently can be used to say that the speaker has got his/her information from somebody else (and perhaps does not guarantee that it is true).

Have you heard? Apparently Susie's pregnant again.

So to speak, more or less and sort/kind of (see 551) are used to show that one is not speaking very exactly, or to soften something which might upset other people. *Well* and *really* can also be used to soften.

I sort of think we ought to start going home, perhaps, really.

I kind of think it's more or less a crime.

Do you like it? ~ Well, yes, it's all right.

That is to say and *at least* can be used to 'back down' from something too strong or definite that one has said.

I'm not working for you again. Well, that's to say, not unless you put my wages up.

Ghosts don't exist. At least, I've never seen one.

I'm afraid (see 28.2) is apologetic: it can introduce a polite refusal, or bad news.

I'm afraid I can't help you. I'm afraid I forgot to buy the stamps.

I suppose can be used to enquire politely about something (respectfully inviting an affirmative answer).

I suppose you're very busy just at the moment?

It can also be used to suggest unwilling agreement.

Can you help me for a minute? ~ I suppose so.

Actually (see 11) can correct misunderstandings.

Hello, John. ~ Actually, my name's Andy.

Well can soften corrections, suggesting 'That's nearly right'.

You live in Oxford, don't you? ~ Well, near Oxford.

Or rather is used to correct oneself.

I'm seeing him in May – or rather early June.

I mean (see 348) can be used to correct oneself or to soften.

Let's meet next Monday – I mean Tuesday.

She's not very nice. I mean, I know some people like her, but ...

17 gaining time

□ *let me see; let's see; well; you know; I don't know; I mean; kind of; sort of*

Expressions of this kind (often called 'fillers') give the speaker time to think.

How much are you selling it for? ~ Well, let me see ...

Why did you do that? ~ Oh, well, you know, I don't know, really, I mean, it just sort of seemed a good idea.

18 showing one's attitude to what one is saying

□ *honestly; frankly; no doubt*

Honestly can be used to claim that one is speaking sincerely.

Honestly, I never said a word to him about the money.

Both *honestly* and *frankly* can introduce critical remarks.

Honestly, John, why do you have to be so rude?

What do you think of my hair? ~ Frankly, dear, it's a disaster.

No doubt (see 377) suggests that the speaker/writer thinks something is probable, but does not know for certain himself/herself.

No doubt the Romans enjoyed telling jokes, just like us.

19 persuading

- *after all; look; look here*

After all (see 31) suggests 'this is a strong argument that you haven't taken into consideration'. *Look* is more strongly persuasive.

I think we should let her go on holiday alone. After all, she is fifteen – she's not a child any more.

You can't go there tomorrow. Look, the trains aren't running.

Look here is an angry exclamation meaning 'You can't say/do that!'

Look here! What are you doing with my suitcase?

No doubt can be used to persuade people politely to do things.

No doubt you'll be paying your rent soon?

20 referring to the other person's expectations

- *actually* (especially BrE); *in fact; as a matter of fact; to tell the truth; well*

These expressions are used when we show whether somebody's expectations have been fulfilled or not. *Actually* (see 11) can be used to say that somebody 'guessed right'.

Did you enjoy your holiday? ~ Very much, actually.

Actually, in fact and *as a matter of fact* can introduce additional surprising or unexpected information.

The weather was awful. Actually, the campsite got flooded and we had to come home.

Was the concert nice? ~ Yes, as a matter of fact it was terrific.

Did you meet the Minister? ~ Yes. In fact, he asked us to lunch.

Actually, in fact, as a matter of fact and *to tell the truth* can be used to say that the hearer's expectations were not fulfilled.

How was the holiday? ~ Well, actually, we didn't go.

Where are the carrots? ~ Well, in fact / to tell the truth, I forgot to buy them.

I hope you passed the exam. ~ No, as a matter of fact, I didn't.

After a new subject has been announced, *well* can suggest that something new or surprising is going to be said about it.

What did you think of her boyfriend? ~ Well, I was a bit surprised . . .

You know that new house? Well, you'll never guess who's bought it.

21 summing up

- *in conclusion; to sum up; briefly; in short*

These expressions are most common in a formal style.

. . . In conclusion, then, we can see that Britain's economic problems were mainly due to lack of industrial investment.

To sum up: most of the committee members supported the idea but a few were against it.

He's lazy, he's ignorant and he's stupid. In short, he's useless.