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 respect to
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
as we shall see
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
(was/have been) found to be
found that
observed in

tend to
characterized by
in the light of
as in the case of
this is (not) the case
see also
in the form of
(as) a form of
different types of
a/the type of
a kind of
kinds of
in a number of ways
in a variety of ways
in so far as

6. Expressing aims, causes and effects

in order to
so that
(be/is) due to
may be due to
(be) due to the fact that
as a result (of)
is a/the result of
result(s) in
because of
caused by
the cause(s) of
the effect(s) of
the/an effect(s) on
the impact of
an impact on
subject to
depend(s) on
dependent on
determined by
in response to

the way(s) in which
the manner in which
is based on
on the basis of/that
(is/are/be) associated with
association between
involved in
responsible for
to ensure that
tend(s) to be
give rise to
by means of
lead(s) to
can/may lead to
so as to
such that
a change in
is consistent with
(as) a consequence of
the consequences of

(as) a means of
the influence of
is related to
(as) a source of
derived from
can be used to
can be applied to
on the part of
at the expense of
for the purpose(s) of
play a role in
play(s) an important role (in)
an important role to play in
play a key role in
an integral part of
lies at the heart of
in the event of
have a significant impact on
is the most common cause of

7. Making contrasts

rather than
as opposed to
in contrast to
in contrast
on the other hand
on the one hand
the difference between

difference(s) in
a number of different
different from
variation in
whether or not
this is not the case
not necessarily

with the exception of
while at the same time
in spite of the fact that
is not the same (thing) as
the other end of the spectrum

8. Comparing

compared with/to
relative to
in the same way (as/that)

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

the corresponding
corresponding to
the advantages and disadvantages of

9. Adding

as well as
as well

in addition
(not only) but also

and so on
a combination of

10. Expressing quantity/degree and increase/decrease

the/a number of
there are a number of
the amount of
the level of
a high level of
the rate of

(in) a (wide) variety of
(in) a/the (wide) range of
in the range of
a large number of
a small number of
an/the increase in

increase in the number of
a/the reduction in
reduction in the number of
the degree of
the degree to which
a high degree of

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/a 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

of the total
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

(even) in the absence of (any)
the/a lack of

the presence or absence of
the majority of

the vast majority of

12. Referring to the text and to other texts

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

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

as follows
the above
the former/latter
the work of

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

at the same 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