

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 250 important phrases for academic speaking, grouped into 16 functional areas.

Spoken phrases

1. Signposting and focusing in lectures/lessons

I was going to / we are going to	going to show you	you can look at	so you can see
I would like to	going to go through	be looking at	you can see here
I want to talk about / look at	going to go into	to deal with	you will see
/ say	going to say	interested in	we/you need to know
what I want to do	I was talking about	if you/we look at	have to look at
I (just) want to	we were talking about	if you think about (it)	look at this
just going to	been talking about	when we/you look at	here we have
going to talk about	we talked about	(and) you can see that	
going to be talking about	we looked at	we can see	
going to look at	we talk about	as you can see	

2. Specifying topics and relations between ideas

in terms of	from the point of view of	as to	the idea that
with respect to	when it comes to	nothing to do with	the notion of
in relation to	in the form of	the idea is that	the meaning of
(in) the context of	on the basis of	the idea of	in the sense (that)
in the case of	to do with	this idea of	

3. Drawing attention to something or focusing on it

in this/that case	the possibility of	one of the things	a very important
the question is	the state of	in particular	one of the key
the point is that	the issue of	the most important	one of the most
the problem of	the question of	the importance of	
the problem with	the nature of	is important to	

4. Clarifying and restating

(so) in other words	in a sense	more or less	in a way that
as I say	if you like	(the) way(s) in which	in such a way
as I said	as it were	the way that	in this/that way
that is to say	you might say	a way of	in the same way
what I mean by	in some way	in the way that	the same thing

5. Giving examples

going to give you an example	such as	an idea of	a bit like
(so) for example	an example of	a sense of	something like
for instance	to show you	what I mean	like this

6. Adding

as well as	and all the rest of it	(not only) but also
and so on (and so forth)	et cetera (et cetera)	

7. Using vague language

or something like that	some sort of	all kinds of	of some kind
something to do with	this/that sort of (thing)	and things like that	or whatever
a kind of	this/that kind of (thing)	in a way	a little bit about
a sort of	the sort of thing	in some ways	a (little) bit more about
some kind of	all sorts of	to some extent	

8. Classifying and comparing things

the same sort of	the kinds of	the type of
the sorts of	these sorts of	types of

9. Making contrasts

on the other hand	at the same time	rather than	but in fact
on the one hand	as opposed to	the difference between	the other way round

10. Expressing relationships between things and ideas

the relationship between	the role of	involved in
a function of	according to	

11. Expressing aims, causes and effects

as a result (of)	one of the reasons	so that	to work out
the effect(s) of	the reason for	in order to	to find out
what happens if	the reason why	the basis of	
what happens to	because of	to see how	

12. Ordering content and making time references

first of all	by the end of	at this stage	in a minute
the first thing (that)	in a moment	for the moment	later on
in the first place	at this point	for a long time	
at the beginning/start (of)	at that point	in the future	
at the end (of)	in this course	period of time	

13. Hedging and expressing degrees of certainty

may or may not	I suppose	as you know	you find that
it seems to me (that)	of course	tend to be	on the whole
I think (that)	the fact that	more likely to	
I would say	we know that	may well be	

14. Marking a shift in or change of topic

(going to) come to	move on to	OK so	all right
come back to (that)	go on to	OK now	let me just
go back to (that)	so we have	all right so	by the way
back to that	so you get	right so	

15. Direct address or instruction to students/audience

(just) to remind you	many of you	if you think about it	on the board
if you remember	most of you	in front of you	What does that mean?
to bear in mind	you might want to (look at)	at the top of	Why do you think...?
to think about	you will find	at the bottom of	What do you think...?
for those of you	you can imagine	on the/your handout	Are there any questions?

16. Expressing quantity and increase/decrease

(lots and) lots of	the number of	more and more	the development of
(quite) a lot (of)	a (whole) series of	as a whole	the process of
a certain amount of	a (whole) range of	the majority of	at the level of
an awful lot of	a variety of	the whole of	
a little bit (of)	all sorts	the rate of (change)	
a number of	a group of	the level of	

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 BALEAP, EURALEX, the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.