



## Grammar Tip #4: How to Tame Those Pesky Prepositions in Signposting Phrases

### SIGNPOSTING PHRASES Jigsaw Activity (Intermediate to Advanced)

Writers use signposts to guide their readers. For example, the list of signposting, or signaling, phrases below this introduction can show:

- how the text or information is organized (*at the beginning of, at the end of*)
- the relationships in the information presented (*as a result of, in addition to, on the basis of*)
- the contrast between ideas (*on the other hand*)
- the highlighting of information or processes (*it is important to*)

For us, as fluent readers and writers, we use and understand this language effortlessly based on our many years of print input and output. But take a quick look at the signposting phrases below and the major role that prepositions play in them. For our students, who are still learning the structure and function of these phrases, the English prepositions can be especially tricky. This jigsaw activity provides engaging practice to help your students master preposition use in these important signposting phrases.

#### Signposting Phrases

- as a result of
- in the case of
- in addition to
- a great deal of
- a wide range of
- the nature of the
- in the context of
- on the other hand
- on the basis of
- for the purpose of
- as part of the
- it is important to
- at the beginning of
- at the end of
- at the bottom of

**MATERIALS/PREPARATION:** Print out the four-word signposting phrase document at the end of this activity. Cut each phrase into individual words. Put the words from 3-5 of the phrases into separate envelopes. (You can also write all the words on separate slips of paper if you don't have a printer.)

Note 1: For larger classes, you may need to print out more than one copy of the list. Just make sure not to put words for the same signposting phrases in the same envelope.

Note 2: If doing all the phrases at once is too much, use subsets in different class periods.



Note 3: You can make this task easier by using word pairs (e.g., *at the/end of*) instead of individual words (e.g., *at/the/end/of*) on the slips of paper.

**STEP 1:** Have students work individually or in pairs. Give each student/pair an envelope.

**STEP 2:** Instruct your students to build four-word signposting phrases using the slips of paper in their envelopes. Depending on class level, your students may already have seen the list of signposting phrases, but do NOT have the list available while the students are working. Otherwise, the activity is not as meaningful and simply becomes a copying/matching activity.

**STEP 3:** Once students have finished assembling their signposting phrases, ask them to compare their phrases with other students.

**STEP 4:** Show the list of signposting phrases (full or abridged) to the class and have your students compare their phrases to it. Discuss as a class. Be sure to accept phrases that are correctly formed but that do not appear on the list. These can be added as options.

**VARIATION (High Intermediate – Advanced)**

Instead of providing students with all the words from each signposting phrase, only give them the words in the signposting phrases that are NOT prepositions. List the prepositions on the board – list each preposition only once! Then follow steps 1-4 as above.

Note: This is a more difficult task because it requires the students to make choices about using prepositions versus sorting out and using all of the slips of paper as in the original activity.