

METADISCOURSE

Metadiscourse is language that allows you to construct a relationship between **yourself, the reader, and the text**. If you use metadiscourse properly, it will **attribute your ideas to their original source and allow you to clearly announce your topic**.

Metadiscourse appears most often in introductions because that is the most natural place for the author to announce his intentions to the reader.

A THREE-WAY RELATIONSHIP

1. Metadiscourse communicates **your own intentions** within the text itself.
I argue that Thomas Jefferson is best understood as a civic republican and not exclusively as a classical liberal.
2. Metadiscourse attempts to invoke a **response in the reader**.
Note well Jefferson's conviction that politics needed to cultivate citizens of virtuous and moral character.
3. Metadiscourse refers to the **structure of your text itself**.
Therefore, Jefferson believed that individual rights would not be protected without citizens who concerned themselves with their moral duties.

A WORD OF CAUTION

Metadiscourse—as with many other writing tools—can improve essays in profound ways. Too much of it, however, will befuddle readers and obscure your ideas.

1. Use metadiscourse in moderation.
2. Too much metadiscourse can bury your ideas and cloud your meaning.

With these strategies under your belt, metadiscourse is sure to enrich your interaction with the texts and perk your reader's interest.

HEDGES AND INTENSIFIERS

1. One of the most useful aspects of metadiscourse involves **hedges** and **intensifiers**.
2. **Hedges** and **intensifiers** allow you to either moderate or elevate your degree of certainty.
3. These tools allow you to orient your readers in a certain direction and can improve your persuasive ability.

COMMON HEDGES

Adverbs: *Usually, often, sometimes, almost, virtually, possibly, perhaps, apparently, in some ways, to a certain extent, somewhat, in some/certain respects*

It **has been often** observed that the American and the French Revolutions radically diverged in their conception of government.

Adjectives: *Most, many, some, a certain number of*

Some scholars have argued that the Bible was most influential book during the American Revolution.

Verbs: *May, might, can, could, seem, appear, suggest, indicate*

The evidence **suggests** that Thomas Jefferson desired to apply republican principles to every aspect of American society.

COMMON INTENSIFIERS

Adverbs: *Very, pretty, quite, rather, clearly, obviously, undoubtedly, certainly, of course, indeed, inevitably, invariably, always*

It is **certainly the case** that the Alien and Sedition Acts were unconstitutional under the First Amendment.

Adjectives: *Key, central, crucial, basic, fundamental, major, principal, essential*

The **crucial** difference between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton involved their contradictory stances on whether or not individual rights could be protected at the local level.

Verbs: *Show, prove, establish, as you/we/everyone knows/can see, it is clear/obvious that*

It is clear that few historic political debates have as much contemporary relevance as the dispute between Jefferson and Hamilton.

PRACTICE NOW