Overview

Students at all levels struggle to find language that expresses their ideas and helps them achieve their rhetorical purpose. Sentence structures offer a useful means of getting students up and running with academic language through either sentence starters or sentence frames. Both approaches are useful for both writing about and discussing different types of texts.

Sentence Starters	Sentence Frames
Making Predictions • I predict that… • If *x* happens, then… • Because *x* did *y*, I expect *z*.	**Summarizing** • Readers often assume that…. • While many suggest *x*, others say *y*…. • (Author's name) agrees/disagrees with *x*, pointing out…
Making Connections • *X* reminds me of… • *X* is similar to *y* because… • *X* is important to *y* because…	**Responding** • *X* claims…which I agree/disagree with because…. • *X's* point assumes *x*, which I would argue means… • While I agree that_____, you could also say…
Making Inferences • *X* means…since *x* is… • Early on the author says…which suggests *x* is… • *X* causes *y* as a result of…which shows…	**Agreeing** • Most will agree that… • I agree with those who suggest that… • *X* offers an effective explanation of why *y* happens, which is especially useful because most think that….
Summarizing • The main idea is… • The author argues that… • In _____, (author's name) implies…	**Disagreeing** • I would challenge *X's* point about *y*, arguing instead... • *X* claims *y*, but recent discoveries show this is… • While *X* suggests *y*, this cannot be true since…
Evaluating • The author's point is/is not valid because… • The author does/does not do a good job of… • The most important aspect/event/idea is…	**Taking the Third Path: Agreeing *and* Disagreeing** • While I agree that…, I reject the larger argument that…since we now know… • I share X's belief that…, but question…due to… • Most concede *x* though few would agree that *y* is true…
Analyzing the Text • The author uses _____ to show/achieve… • The author assumes _____ which is/is not true… • The use of _____ strengthens/weakens the author's argument by	**Arguing** • Although *x* is increasing/decreasing, it is not *y* but *z* that is the cause… • While *x* is true, I would argue *y* because of *z*. • *X* was, in the past, the most important factor but *y* has changed, making it the real cause.
Clarifying • What the author is saying is… • Given that *x* happened, the author is trying to show… • *X* is not _____ but is, instead, _____ since….	**Explaining Importance** • Based on *x*, people assumed *y*, which made sense at the time, but now we realize *z*, which means…. • This change questions our previous understanding of *x*, which means that now we must assume… • While this conclusion appears insignificant, it challenges our current understanding of *x*, which means that…
Synthesizing • These elements/details, when considered together, suggest… • Initial impressions suggested *x*, but after learning _____ it is now clear that… • It is not a question of *x* but rather of *y* because….	

For more about the use and effectiveness of sentence starters, see "A Cognitive Strategies Approach to Reading and Writing Instruction for English Learners in Secondary School," by Olson and Land in *Research in the Teaching of English* (Feb 2007); to learn more about sentence frames, consult *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, by Graff and Birkenstein (Norton 2006).