

Academic Language, Expressions, Prompts and Frames

The following “Cue Cards” share expressions, prompts, and frames that can be used to teach the skills of *analyzing, comparing, categorizing and classifying, problem solving, persuading, empathizing, synthesizing, interpreting, evaluating, and applying*. Become familiar with these terms, and point them out when you or your students use them in discussion and or written tasks. Have “Cue Cards” available while developing lessons and during class discussions. Model how to effectively use academic language and provide opportunities for students to use the expressions, prompts, and frames in the classroom while interacting in large or small group settings. Our goal as teachers should be to have our students use these devices with automaticity.



Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Analyzing

Common expressions used when **analyzing** include:

- ▮ When we break it down into the components of..., we can see that...
- ▮ The elements (parts) are related in the following ways:
- ▮ There seems to be a hierarchical relationship between these components...
- ▮ Let's see how the pieces fit together to make...
- ▮ Each component plays a key role. First...
- ▮ We can describe it as...; its important traits are...
- ▮ The function of...is...
- ▮ Can we break down this component even further? How about...
- ▮ We need to identify the...
- ▮ This is related to, extraneous to, or not applicable because...
- ▮ The least (most) essential statements are...
- ▮ The relationship between...and...is...
- ▮ There is a pattern that emerges when you look at...
- ▮ When you take a closer look at this part, you see that...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **analyze** when speaking or writing:

- ▮ Debate the following issue/statement:
- ▮ Explain the justification of...
- ▮ Describe the process of...
- ▮ Identify the most important traits of ...
- ▮ Imagine you are a...and describe...
- ▮ Make a detailed description of...
- ▮ Analyze the contributions of...to...
- ▮ Investigate the events surrounding...
- ▮ Create a personality profile for...
- ▮ Write a dialog for two persons with opposing points of view.

Adapted from: *Developing Academic Thinking Skills In Grades 6-12* Jeff Zwiers, 2004

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Comparing

Common expressions used when **comparing** include:

- ▮ When we break it down into the components of...
- ▮ They are similar because...
- ▮ The two differ because one...while the other...
- ▮ If we look closely at...we will see that...is different from...
- ▮ This is much like when...
- ▮ Notice how the two compare...
- ▮ Let's consider the opposite case of...
- ▮ It is like a...but differs in that...
- ▮ On the other hand...
- ▮ In contrast to what (person) says, I believe...
- ▮ Despite these similarities, the two are very different in that...
- ▮ It is important to distinguish between...
- ▮ Yet there is an important difference...
- ▮ This is related to (not applicable) because...
- ▮ The least (most) essential statements are...
- ▮ The relationship between...and...
- ▮ There is a pattern that emerges when we look at...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **compare** when speaking or writing:

- ▮ Compare your experience to the experience found in the text (e.g. stories, textbooks, excerpts, poems, biographies pictures, articles, movies).
- ▮ Compare characters to other characters in the same story, to themselves at different points in the story, or to characters in other stories or related expository texts.
- ▮ Compare themes, authors', purposes, or main ideas of two different narratives.
- ▮ Create two historical accounts of the same event through different viewpoints.
- ▮ Compare the event as described by this primary source document to that of the textbook.
- ▮ Compare the contributions of...to...

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Categorizing and Classifying

*Common expressions used when **categorizing and classifying** include:*

- ▯ It is important because...
- ▯ It is not that important because...
- ▯ It belongs in the category of...
- ▯ We should put this in the... group because...
- ▯ I would call this a type of...
- ▯ It fits in this (category, file, genre) because...
- ▯ These have in common the...
- ▯ The fact that it... distinguishes it from...
- ▯ This is a very relevant point because...
- ▯ These traits make it belong in the...category.
- ▯ The elements are related in the following ways...
- ▯ This is related to (extraneous to, not applicable) because...
- ▯ I don't think it fits anywhere; it needs a new category that we could call...
- ▯ The least (most) essential statements are...
- ▯ This is an important quote because...
- ▯ There is a pattern that emerges when we look at...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **categorize and classify** when speaking or writing:

- ▯ Create a table that categorizes these...
- ▯ Categorize the following traits...
- ▯ Find the most relevant statements and quotes about...
- ▯ Find the main idea of this paragraph, speech, movie, etc.
- ▯ Classify the following group of...

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Identifying Cause and Effect

*Common expressions used when **identifying cause and effect** include:*

- ▯ I think...was caused by...
- ▯ That was not cause by...because...
- ▯ Just because it happened after...doesn't mean it was caused by...
- ▯ The main cause was probably...
- ▯ I hypothesize that...caused...
- ▯ The most likely cause was...
- ▯ The...led to..., which led to...
- ▯ He was motivated by...
- ▯ The effects of... were...
- ▯ The reason...
- ▯ That wasn't caused by...because...
- ▯ It was more than mere coincidence in this case because...
- ▯ Even though many people thought that the cause was..., I believe it was...
- ▯ Each...played a key role. First...
- ▯ The function of...was to...
- ▯ The relationship between...and...was causal.
- ▯ There is a pattern that emerges when we look at...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **identify cause and effect** when speaking or writing:

- ▯ Argue that there was a causal relationship between...
- ▯ Describe the cause and effects of...
- ▯ Investigate the events surrounding...
- ▯ What motive did she/he have for...?
- ▯ If you were...would you have...?
- ▯ Create a poster with evidence that supports two possible causes (or effects) of...
- ▯ Write an alternate ending or outcome for this event.

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Problem Solving

Common expressions used when **problem solving** include:

- We need to define the problem.
- The main problem is...
- The conflict is mainly between...
- This is a major problem for several reasons.
- There are different ways to solve this problem.
- The best solution is...because...
- I think that the answer is...because...
- I predict that...
- I'll bet that...because...
- Let's look at the roots of the problem.
- I hypothesize that...
- The negatives of such a solution are...
- When we break the problem down into...
- The main cause of this problem seems to be...
- We need to identify the...
- There is a pattern that emerges when we look at...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **problem solve** when speaking or writing:

- Debate the following problem.
- If you had the problem of...what would you do?
- Choose one side of an issue or problem; now argue for the opposite side.
- You have 30 minutes to solve this serious world problem. Put your heads together to solve it.
- We need to think outside of the box to generate possible answers.
- Investigate the events surrounding...
- Write a letter to...to explain how to approach the current problem and solve it.
- Write a dialogue for two persons with opposing solutions to a problem; describe how they solve it.

Adapted from: *Developing Academic Thinking Skills*
In *Grades 6-12* Jeff Zwiers, 2004

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Persuading

Common expressions used when **persuading** include:

- Although not everybody would agree, my position is...
- I have several reasons for arguing this point of view.
- My first reason is... Another reason is...
- Therefore, although some people maintain that...
- There is a lot of discussion about whether...
- Even though the issue has two sides, I think I have shown that...
- These (facts, reasons, data) strongly suggest that...
- On the other hand, there are many who disagree with the idea that...
- They also argue that...
- A further point they make is...
- However there are several reasons to oppose this point of view.
- After looking at both sides of the issue and the evidence, I believe it is best to...because...
- Even though it seems that there is sufficient reason to do this, we must remember...
- The advantages of...outweigh the disadvantages of...
- That is a good point, but I think the evidence points to...

Following are prompts that encourage students to use **persuasion** when speaking or writing:

- Debate the following issue/statement.
- Compare the two characters.
- Make a detailed description of...
- Evaluate the contributions of... to...
- Write a dialogue for two persons with opposing points of view.
- Persuade a local government to...
- Convince a teacher to...

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Empathizing

*Common expressions used when **empathizing** include:*

- ▮ To echo what they were saying, we think that...
- ▮ I feel the same way, with a slight difference...
- ▮ If I were in (person)'s shoes, I would...
- ▮ I think (person) felt...because...
- ▮ Let's remember the time in which (person) lived and what (he/she) went through.
- ▮ First...I'll bet (person) was thinking...
- ▮ How would you feel if you were (him/her)? I would...
- ▮ Do you have any idea on how she might of felt?
- ▮ By his reaction to the situation, I think he was probably feeling...
- ▮ Each experience played a key role in the formation of his personality. First...
- ▮ From their perspective, they think of it as...
- ▮ The person probably considers it to be...
- ▮ Yet from her point of view, she thinks that...
- ▮ I was thinking along those same lines...
- ▮ But in her mind, she believes that...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **empathize** when speaking or writing:

- ▮ Debate the following issue/statement
- ▮ Compare the thoughts and feelings of two characters.
- ▮ Write an autobiography of a (person).
- ▮ Analyze the contributions of...to...
- ▮ Investigate the events surrounding...
- ▮ Create a personality profile for...
- ▮ Write a dialog for two persons with opposing points of view.
- ▮ Write a journal entry from the perspective of...

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Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Synthesizing

*Common expressions used when **synthesizing** include:*

- ▮ In a nutshell it means that...
- ▮ Other sources also argue that...
- ▮ It all boils down to...
- ▮ Even though it seems that the text is about... I think that...
- ▮ The author is essentially saying...
- ▮ If we think about all the issues we come up with...
- ▮ One source is not enough to make such a decision.
- ▮ Upon gathering all the facts we can conclude that...
- ▮ The elements (parts) are related in the following ways...
- ▮ When we pull all the pieces together, we see that...
- ▮ Its most important traits are...
- ▮ If history is any indication, then...
- ▮ Which research supported that?
- ▮ There is more than one way to approach this issue.

Following are prompts that encourage students to **synthesize** when speaking or writing:

- ▮ Write a journal entry from the perspective of...
- ▮ Create a sculpture that relates to...
- ▮ Design a greeting card for...to send...
- ▮ Write a letter of appreciation to a historical figure.
- ▮ Construct a modern folktale about...
- ▮ Create a song or poem expressing your feelings about...
- ▮ Compose a short story from the point of view of a...
- ▮ Create a proposal with different alternatives for making a major change in your community.

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Interpreting

*Common expressions used when **interpreting** include:*

- ▮ It really means...because...

- This is analogous to...
- One way to interpret this is...
- The...is an important symbol for...because...
- This part meant that...
- For us in modern times, it could mean that...
- This...teaches us that...
- The...is a metaphor for...
- The...is like...because...
- If we read between the lines, we see that...
- The author used that analogy because...
- This is a figurative way to describe how...
- This is not literal—that's the authors way to describe...
- This is similar to my life in...
- From the part where...I infer that...
- In this context the word means...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **empathize** when speaking or writing:

- Explain how the concrete idea of...helps to describe the abstract concept of...
- Compare...with...
- Infer the meaning of this section of the text.
- Create a metaphor for...
- What can this (event) teach us about how to act today?
- What did his/her actions mean?
- Change the ending of this story.
- What conclusions can you draw from this?
- What assumptions can we make about this?
- Imagine you are...and map out your strategy for...
- Show the importance of...
- Explain how this story or event teaches us a lesson about life.
- Create a symbol for...

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Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Evaluating
Common expressions used when **evaluating** include:

- Assess the importance of...by using the following criteria...
- Decide whether...has the moral right to...
- Critique the actions of...
- Evaluate the contributions of...
- Research shows that...
- We must not lose sight of the number one criterion for... This is the...
- Was he thinking about this issue when he committed the act?
- The...meets the criteria of...in the following ways... First...
- The possible consequences of this opinion are dangerous because...
- Estimate the chances over the next 20 years that...
- Considering..., decide whether or not to...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **evaluate** when speaking or writing:

- Debate the following issue/statement.
- Write a newspaper article supporting your opinion.
- Criticize the decision to...
- Defend the decision to...
- Write an essay supporting your opinions about...
- What criteria would you decide whether a movie is good? Why?
- Write a comic strip or paper that argues your point of view.
- Evaluate the importance of this historic event.
- Create a philosophical question and answer it (e.g., What is love?).
- What is the likelihood (probability, chance) that...
- Evaluate the impact that this novel had on...

Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Communicating
Common expressions used when **communicating** include:

- We ought to distinguish between...

- Let's consider not only...but...
- I'd like to build on what you said about...
- It is not a case of...but rather...
- What struck me was...
- I would like to add that...
- We have all heard that..., but I propose a new way of looking at...
- We should make a distinction between...
- This isn't all that relevant because...
- Let's see how the pieces fit together to make...
- So what you are saying is...
- I have two points that relate to what you said.
 - First...
 - Can you clarify your last point?
 - I think it is more helpful to look at...
 - This leads us to ask the question...
 - They seem to conflict because...
 - It is analogous to...
 - One aspect of this that is particularly important is...because...
 - There is a pattern that emerges when we look at...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **communicate clearly** when speaking or writing:

- Convince us to...
- Compare the two characters.
- Make a detailed description of...
- Analyze the contributions of...to...
- Investigate the events surrounding...
- Create a personality profile of...
- Write a dialogue for two persons with opposing points of view.

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Academic Language Expressions, Prompts and Frames for Application

*Common expressions used when **applying** include:*

- We need to apply the ideas we learned about...to...
- If we apply what we read about...

- What we learned about...helps us understand...
- Use the criteria to evaluate the worth of...
- In this case, we should use...
- That formula doesn't apply here because...
- We need to modify our ideas about...
- Put the theory into practice by...
- What we learned about...can help us here because...

Following are prompts that encourage students to **apply knowledge** when speaking or writing:

- Write a critique of...
- Build
- Design a...
- Judge...
- Perform...
- Role-play...
- Test...
- Adapt...
- Illustrate...
- Produce...
- Create a metaphor or analogy for...
- Solve the problem of...
- Consider the issue of... and write a letter...
- Reflect on the... and write a recommendation for...
- Imagine...
- Argue...
- Assume the role of...

