Digressing from the main topic

As you may know, 'transition signals' are words and expressions used by the speaker which help the audience to understand the structure of the presentation. You use transition signals when you want to move from one subject or item to another, when you want to give examples, if you want to digress, when you want to describe visual aids, when you want to invite questions, and when you want to sum up or conclude. Here you will learn the expressions you can use when you want to digress from the main topic.

During a presentation, you might think of something you want to tell your audience that is not directly related to the main presentation. There are a number of expressions you can use to inform your audience that you are moving away from the main theme. Some of these are given below.

- By the way... (informal)
- Let me digress for a moment... (formal)
- I’d like to say in passing that... (formal or neutral)
- To change the subject for a moment... (neutral to informal)

When you finish the digression, you can use another transition signal to bring you back to the main topic. A common way of doing this is to use the following transition signals:

- Anyway, to get back to the topic...
- Getting back to the main topic...
- Let me get back to the point...

Activity: For one week, make a note of any expressions that you hear in lectures or in interviews on television when the speaker digresses from the main topic. As you listen:

- Make a note of the main topic
- Make a note of the expression which is used to digress from the topic
- Make a note of the subject of the digression
- Make a note of the expression used to return to the main topic.