

ACE Quick Guide to Hedging (Using Cautious Language)

Hedging is an essential feature of academic writing. Writers often use cautious, tentative language such as **arguably...** or **it seems likely that...** in order to distinguish between facts and claims. When you include hedging language in your writing, you sound more credible, well-informed, and scholarly. Tips for hedging:

1. Use hedging verbs such as *appear* or *tend to*

Example: Smith (2023) **appears to** overlook this aspect of leadership, as...

2. Use hedging adverbs such as *considerably* or *typically*

Example: The British economy grew **considerably** faster in the first quarter than expected.

Other hedging adverbs:

<i>approximately</i>	<i>relatively</i>	<i>seemingly</i>	<i>to some extent</i>	<i>in some cases</i>
<i>arguably</i>	<i>reportedly</i>	<i>apparently</i>	<i>fairly</i>	<i>rather</i>
<i>slightly</i>	<i>reasonably</i>	<i>supposedly</i>	<i>not necessarily</i>	<i>frequently</i>

Note: adverbs often go just before the main verb in a sentence.

4. Use language of probability

Language of probability such as **may, might, could, and can** is used to be cautious about the past, present, and future.

Example: Managers who lead by example are more likely to have motivated staff (Thom, 2023).

5. Use a combination of structures

- Research (Soady, 2021; Calvin, 2023) on the experiences of university students **appears to indicate that** social class is a **determiner** of participation in student societies.
- Early reports (BBC News, 2023) **seem to suggest that** a deal between the US and Iran **may** be signed before midnight.
- However, it **may not** be possible for all participants to be interviewed (Appendix A).

Reference List

Paterson, K. and Wedge, R. (2013) *Oxford Grammar for EAP*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

University of Bristol (2021) *Hedging*. Available at: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-language/media/BEAP/5.4/index.html#:~:text=Hedging%20language%20refers%20to%20how,evidence%20is%20not%20very%20strong> (Accessed: 10 January 2025).

Additional Resources

The [ACE Academic Writing Essentials](#) provides advice on some of the key principles of academic writing.



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