

HEDGING

in academic writing

Hedging, also called *cautious language* or *tentative language*, is a way of softening the language by making the claims or conclusions less absolute. It is an important part of academic style. Hedging is achieved by using various *introductory verbs*, *modal verbs*, *nouns*, *adverbs*, *adjectives* and some other phrases.

INTRODUCTORY VERBS

- tend to
- assume
- indicate
- estimate
- seem to
- appear to be
- doubt
- believe
- suggest

E.g. *Studies **tend to** show a link between drug use and crime.*

ADVERBS

- probably
- possibly
- seemingly
- apparently
- arguably
- perhaps
- maybe
- presumably
- conceivably

E.g. *This is **possibly** because patients in the trial were not randomly selected.*

MODAL VERBS

- may
- might
- can
- could

E.g. *Offering free vitamins to all school age children **could** save the National Health Service billions of pounds over the next five years.*

ADJECTIVES

- probable
- possible
- likely
- doubtful
- unlikely
- uncertain

E.g. *It is **probable** that obesity in the elderly increases the risk of stroke.*

NOUNS

- probability
- possibility
- likelihood
- assumption
- tendency
- indication
- estimate
- evidence
- trend
- claim

E.g. *This gives an **indication** that current measures are not enough to tackle childhood health issues such as obesity.*

OTHER PHRASES

Words or phrases to show frequency, degree, quantity and time.

- sometimes
- often
- generally
- commonly
- frequently
- approximately
- somewhat

Introductory phrases.

- It is generally agreed that
- In our opinion
- In our view

If clauses.

- if true
- if anything

