



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 and strategies 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.

3 Use the **impersonal that clause** to distance yourself from an argument or perspective

Examples of ways to **open your sentences**:

- It is widely argued *that...*
- It has been suggested *that...*
- It is commonly believed *that...*
- It is generally accepted *that...*
- It is possible to argue *that...*

You can also use a *that* clause to refer to **studies** and **people**:

Studies

Jones (2023) has indicated *that...*

The evidence (Wrigley, 2022; Martin, 2023) suggests *that...*

A recent study (Gov.uk, 2022) indicates *that...*

People

Several leaders in Organisation x believe *that...*

Many employees felt *that...*

(Adapted from University of Bristol, 2021)



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**

Examples:

- 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.
- It **appears that** it **may not** be possible for all participants to be interviewed (Appendix A).

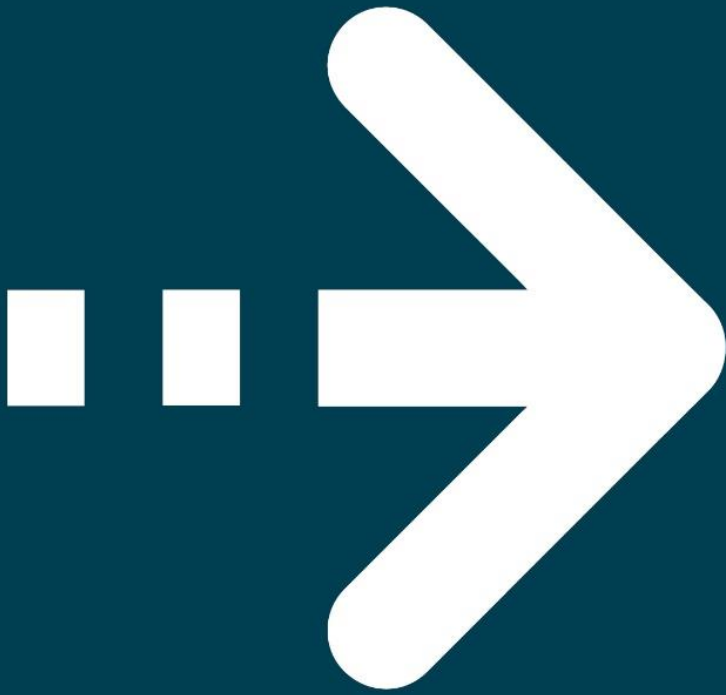
(Adapted from University of Bristol, 2021)

Reference List

Paterson, K. & 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: 4 December 2023)



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