

## Hedging in Academic Writing

In academic American English texts, many writers use hedging—or softening—language when they make claims or express personal points of view. This shows that they want their claims to be accurate and precise.

The following are some expressions writers can use to cautiously introduce their claims.

### Adverbs of Frequency

Frequently	Often	Usually	Ordinarily	Occasionally
On occasion	Sometimes	At times	From time to time	Most of the time
Almost / hardly never	Rarely	Seldom	Almost /nearly always	In general / generally

The frequency adverbs are often used with verbs in the Present Simple tense. They stand after the main verb, after the verb “to be,” or at the beginning of the sentence:

- Most people hardly ever search for more information regarding points of view they disagree with.
- Most people are rarely inclined to search for more information regarding points of view they disagree with.
- In general, most people are not inclined to search for more information regarding points of view they disagree with.

### Adjectives of Possibility

Words “possible” or “probable” can be used to modify nouns:

- a probable cause of, a possible effect of ...

### Quantifiers of Nouns

The following quantifiers used before nouns help make claims more precise and accurate:

Many (of)	Much (of)	Some (of)	A number of
A (certain) amount of	A great deal of	A lot of	A (little) bit of
A minority of	A majority of		

- Much of the research on the topic suggests that...
- A number of studies have shown that ...

## Verbs as Hedgers

The following verbs often appear in academic writing:

Possibility	May, might, could
Ability	Can, be able to
Recommendation, conclusion	Should, ought to
Obligation and necessity	Must, have to, need to
Prediction	Will, would
Lexical verbs that cautiously introduce claims	Appear, seem to, suggest, help (to), contribute (to), tend (to)

In academic writing, *may*, *might*, and *could* are often used to describe results of scientific research.

- The results of the study seem to indicate that...
- According to the Smith, lack of exercise may lead to several negative effects.
- Excessive screen time appears to contribute to childhood obesity.

**NOTE:** Be careful with the use of “will.” Use it only when you are very certain that your prediction is true.

## Adjectives and Adverbs

The following expressions can also help express claims in more careful and accurate ways:

According to + noun	Actually	Apparent(ly)	Broad(ly)	Clear(ly)
Comparative(ly)	Essential(ly)	Fairly	Likely	Mere(ly)
Most (+ adj)	Nearly	Normal(ly)	Partial(ly)	Partly
Potential(ly)	Presumably	Relative(ly)	Relative to	Slight(ly)
Somehow	Somewhat	Sufficient(ly)	Particular(ly)	Unlikely
Probably	Possibly	Conceivably	Hopeful(ly)	Perhaps

**IMPORTANT:** When writers try to persuade readers with overstatements and exaggerations, they can be perceived as irresponsible or untrustworthy.

### Avoid the following expressions:

Always	All	Complete(ly)	Extreme(ly)	Totally
Everywhere	Everyone	Nothing	No one	Nobody
Never	Absolute(ly)	Awful(ly)	Bad(ly)	By all means
Certain(ly)	Ever	Literally	For sure	Fully
So + adj	Sure(ly)	Terrible	Too + adj	Unbelievable(ly)
Definite(ly)	Enormous(ly)	Entire(ly)	Very	Very much
Perfect	Best	Worst	Really	Everything