

Lesson Plan:

Hedging language in academic and professional writing

LEVEL	TIME	SKILLS	FOCUS
Advanced (C1-C2)	60-90 minutes	Writing, reading	Expressing uncertainty, approximation, and distancing in formal written English

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the purpose and function of hedging in academic and professional writing
- Use a range of hedging devices: modal verbs, adverbs, reporting verbs, nouns, adjectives
- Distinguish between appropriate caution and vague, unsupported claims
- Incorporate hedging naturally into formal written text

TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

Hedging with modal verbs

- This may indicate a wider trend.
- The results could suggest a causal relationship.
- The policy might have contributed to the decline.

Adverbial hedges

- apparently
- seemingly
- probably
- arguably
- to some extent
- in many cases
- under certain conditions

Reporting verb hedges

- suggest, indicate, appear, seem, imply, tend to
- The data suggests...
- It appears that...
- This tends to occur when...

Nouns and adjectives

- There is a possibility that...
- It is likely/unlikely that...
- There is evidence to support the claim that...
- A degree of uncertainty remains.

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up (10 min)

Task: Compare two abstracts: one with hedging, one without.

- 'Drinking coffee causes cancer.' vs. 'Some studies suggest that excessive coffee consumption may be linked to...'
- Why is the second more appropriate in academic writing?

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Categories of hedging devices with examples.

- Function: show awareness of limitations, avoid overclaiming, distance from facts not 100% confirmed.
- Over-hedging: using so many hedges that no point is made — also a problem.

3. Guided practice (10 min)

Task: Add appropriate hedging to overclaiming sentences.

- 'Social media causes depression.' → 'Research suggests that social media may contribute to...'
- 'Climate change will destroy the planet.' → hedge this appropriately.

4. Writing task (25 min)

Task: Write a short academic paragraph on a current topic using at least 5 hedging devices.

- Topics: AI and employment, urban migration, dietary habits.
- Peer review: is the hedging appropriate or excessive?

5. Editing task (10 min)

Task: Remove over-hedging from a paragraph that has become vague.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Rewrite 5 bold, unsupported claims as appropriately hedged academic sentences.
2. Write a research summary (100–130 words) on any topic using hedging throughout.
3. Find 10 hedging devices in an academic article and categorize them.