

### 3.5 Using Academic Caution

A key feature of academic writing is the need to be cautious when making claims or statements. This is also known as "hedging", a term commonly used in the financial world, which means to insure against a loss. In the same way, writers use caution to protect their ideas from a strong attack and to avoid making false claims. By

exercising caution you can also demonstrate that you:

- Recognise that alternative points of view may also be valid
- Show judgement when expressing your opinions
- Are aware of constraints or circumstances that mitigate your argument.

Remember that your purpose is to be as accurate as possible when making a claim and as 100% certainty is not always possible, it is better to soften your claim with cautious language.

#### How to express caution in academic writing:

There are many ways of expressing caution:

1. Using modal verbs (would, could, may, might etc.)
2. Using adverbs (possibly, perhaps, probably, apparently)
3. Using adjectives (likely, probable, uncertain, doubtful)
4. Using impersonal verb forms (it seems that, it appears, it suggests, it is generally agreed that)
5. By qualifying the probability (it is rather unlikely, it is quite probable, it is almost certain, it is often true)

Expand this list with examples from your own writing.