

## Hedging Language

An important feature of academic writing is the concept of **cautious language**, often called "**hedging**" or "**vague language**". In other words, it is necessary to make decisions about your stance on a particular subject, or the strength of the claims you are making.

1. **Introductory verbs:** e.g. seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest
  
2. **Certain lexical verbs** e.g. believe, assume, suggest
  
3. **Certain modal verbs:** e.g. will, must, would, may, might, could
  
4. **Adverbs of frequency** e.g. often, sometimes, usually
  
4. **Modal adverbs** e.g. certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably, arguably
  
5. **Modal adjectives** e.g. certain, definite, clear, probable, possible
  
6. **Modal nouns** e.g. assumption, possibility, probability
  
7. **That clauses**  
e.g. It could be the case that .  
e.g. It might be suggested that .  
e.g. There is every hope that .
  
8. **To-clause + adjective**  
e.g. It may be possible to obtain .  
e.g. It is important to develop .  
e.g. It is useful to study .

Source: <http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/hedge.htm>

## Exercise Practice

*Rewrite these sentences using hedging language.*

1. Playing violent video games causes more aggression, bullying, and fighting.
2. Mars is the focus of much scientific study and the foremost planet for human colonization.
3. News reports can never be trusted because of media bias, journalist interpretation and agenda setting.
4. The main concerns for the future generations are global food supplies and population growth. Both of these have to be addressed by international leaders within the next five years.
5. Most people think that Climate Change is caused by human activities.
6. The key factor of divorce is gender hierarchy and gender inequality.
7. The impact of the UK's ageing population will lead to increased welfare costs. Consequently, this will result in higher taxes and an increased retirement age for younger people.
8. Everybody agrees that the main cause of the financial crash was subprime mortgage lending.

## Possible Answers

1. **It is assumed that** playing violent video games **may** cause more aggression, bullying, and fighting.
2. Mars is **certainly the** focus of much scientific study and **often considered** the foremost planet for human colonization.
3. **It could be the case that certain** news reports can never be trusted because of **the possibility of** media bias, journalist interpretation and agenda setting.
4. **It could be suggested that** the main concerns for the future generations are **probably going to be** global food supplies and population growth. **This seems to suggest that** both of these **should be** addressed by international leaders within the next five years.
5. **It is generally believed** that Climate Change is caused by human activities.
6. **It could be the case that one** key factor of divorce is gender hierarchy and gender inequality.
7. The impact of the UK's ageing population will **arguably** lead to increased welfare costs. Consequently, this will **probably** result in higher taxes and an increased retirement age for **many** younger people.
8. **Evidence indicates** that the main cause of the financial crash was subprime mortgage lending.

\*There a variety of answers for this exercise.