

MAKING CLAIMS AND USING HEDGES

When writing, your claims must be clear, precise, and provable. Sometimes, however, you may need to provide hedges to soften or show potential uncertainty in your claims. You can make your writing more accurate and nuanced by fine-tuning your claims to ensure that they show the proper level of certainty.

Support all claims with strong evidence and reasoning throughout the text of your paper.

MAKING STRONG CLAIMS

Claims are the argumentative backbone of a paper's structure. Thesis statements include the main claim of a paper, and each body paragraph should discuss another claim based on part of that thesis statement. In academic writing, claims should be:

1. **Assertive:** The position you argue for must be evident and definitive to the audience.
2. **Specific:** The ideas expressed should be detailed rather than vague.
3. **Provable:** The position should be arguable and supported by reasoning and evidence.

COMPARING CLAIMS

Consider the two following claims to better understand the importance of writing strong claims:

Weak Claim: Showing clarity and precision in your writing can make it better.

1. **Assertive:** The assertion, "can make it better," is not a definitive claim but a vague thought.
2. **Specific:** The claim lacks detail about how clarity and precision can be achieved.
3. **Provable:** Since the claim lacks specific details and a distinct assertion, it would be difficult to try to provide evidence for this claim.

Strong Claim: By providing your argument in simple, clear terms, using consistent language, and avoiding tangential ideas, your writing will become clearer and more precise, allowing your readers to better understand your ideas.

1. **Assertive:** There is a clear assertion that clarity and precision can improve an audience's understanding of your argument.
2. **Specific:** There are three specific ideas that are provided to show how clarity and precision could be implemented.
3. **Provable:** You would then include sources from your research in the body of your paper to support your claim.

USING HEDGES

When discussing evidence, it may be appropriate to use hedges to limit the scope and severity of your claims. Some worry that including hedges may make their arguments appear weaker; however, including hedges improve clarity because making overconfident claims can show a lack of nuance. Writers can add hedges in various forms, including verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and phrases.

TYPES OF HEDGES

1. Verbs–

- a. **Action:** Appears, implies, indicates, tends, seems, suggests
 - There **appears** to be a causal relationship between academic performance and hours slept the previous night.
- b. **Auxiliary:** Can, could, may, might, should
 - The pilot study implied there **could** be a link between this medication and a reduction in tumor growth.

2. Adjectives–

- a. **Probability:** Likely, possible, probable, potential, unlikely
 - Statistical analysis demonstrated that the results were statistically significant; thus, the results are **unlikely** to have been caused by random chance.
- b. **Frequency:** Few, less, many, more, most, much, partial, some
 - In **most** research trials, the addition of green tea extracts resulted in a decrease in bacterial growth.

3. Adverbs–

- a. **Probability:** Maybe, perhaps, potentially, probably, presumably, relatively
 - This methodology could **potentially** lead to more accurate and replicable results than prior experiments.
- b. **Frequency:** frequently, generally, occasionally, rarely, sometimes, usually
 - Participants in the survey **rarely** dropped out of the study since the questions provided were brief and easy to answer.

4. Phrases–

- a. Based on past research, Current evidence suggests, Many scholars agree that
 - **Many scholars agree that** the prevalence of malaria in the South impacted several battles in the American Civil War.

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