

IELTS EXAM TRAINING COURSES

ADVANCED WRITING TASK 2

Hedging - 10 simple ways to sound more cautious

How many ways can we hedge? Take a look!

1. Women **tend to** be more cautious when driving in built-up areas.
2. Younger men **may** drive later at night, and this **could** be the reason for the high accident rate.
3. **It is possible that** women are more hesitant when parking.
4. **In many respects**, female drivers are just as capable as male drivers when it comes to parking.
5. **There appears** to be a link between social media and adolescent depression.
6. A 2005 study **suggested** that teenage boys who use social media **often** suffer from low-self esteem.
7. **Apparently** adolescents lose sleep because of the 'fear of missing out' on social media posts.
8. **It seems fair to say that** social media has been the biggest influence on young people's mental health.
9. Most people **would** argue that it is the parent's responsibility to monitor social media use.
10. Too much texting can have **quite a** negative effect on a child's literacy skills.

1. Use 'tend to'

for suggesting this is the way people usually (but not always) behave:

Women **tend to** be more cautious when driving in built-up areas.

There is a tendency for younger men to drive dangerously when they have just passed their test.

People **have a tendency to** blame the government.

2. Use Modal verbs:

Such as will, may, could, might, would

- **This may show that the results are conclusive.**

Modal verbs can be used to say that something is **possible** rather than definite:

- We **might/may/could** see a significant rise in extreme weather events if nothing is done to combat global warming.
- Most people **would** argue that it is wrong to steal.

3. Use these 'cautious' adverbs, adjectives and nouns

e.g. *possibly, probably, sometimes, generally, commonly, likely, unlikely*

*Social media bullying is **probably** the most worrying trend in recent years.*

*People who over-eat and do little exercise **are more likely to** become obese.*

*It is **possible/probable/likely/not certain/not definite** that people who smoke will die prematurely.*

*There is **a possibility, probability, likelihood, (an) assumption** that obesity in children will increase.*

4. Use other hedging expressions

All of these expressions will help you soften a statement (but don't over-use them!):

On balance,

As a rule,

To some extent/up to a point,

In some/many respects,

In a/one sense,

More or less

5. Use 'appearance' verbs

e.g. *appear, seem, look*

*There **appears to be** a link between social media and adolescent depression.*

The use of 'appears to be' rather than 'is' gives the idea that the connection is not 100% proven.

*The findings **seem to suggest** that there is a link between social media use and adolescent depression.*

Notice the grammar options for this structure:

- *The findings appear/seem **to + verb***

- *There appears/seems to be + noun*
 - *It appears/seems/looks as if there might be a link between...*
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6. Choose 'weak' verbs

e.g. *suggest, indicate*

A 2005 study *suggested/indicated that* teenage boys who use social media often suffer from low-self esteem.

The latest research *appears to show/indicate...*

The evidence *suggests...*

Studies *have demonstrated...*

*This is softer than 'concluded' 'stated' 'confirmed' 'proved' or 'demonstrated'.

7. Use these adverbs:

Apparently (= it appears that...) Graduates are **apparently** finding it difficult to get a job.

Arguably (= it could be argued that...) Graduates are **arguably** better off than non-graduates.

Supposedly (= it is generally supposed that...) Young people are **supposedly** fitter than old people.

Not necessarily (= not always) Young people are **not necessarily** fitter than old people.

8. Use 'it....that' expressions

It is often thought that...

It has been argued that...

It is possible to argue that...

It has been suggested that...

It seems fair to say that...

9. Refer to other people

Most people would agree that...

Some people say that...

Those in favour believe that...

Proponents/Opponents of (e.g. hunting) believe that...

10. Use 'Weakening adverbs':

slightly, fairly, quite, rather, approximately, relatively

It is **quite** difficult to define what makes a 'good' driver. I'm **quite a** good driver! I'm **quite** good **at** driving.

To summarise

Whichever way you choose to hedge, remember that

- Hedging language sounds more **professional**
 - Hedging language reduces the author's likelihood of **generalising, oversimplifying** and getting things **wrong**.
 - Hedging allows writers to use language with more **subtlety** and **precision**.
 - Hedging allows you to use **less direct** language, making your views more **measured and cautious**.
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Let's hedge!

Task 1:

Hedge these sentences using the suggestions wherever necessary (there may be more than one right answer):

1. Drought **is** the biggest danger in many developing countries.(appears)
2. People **are** much more aggressive when they are drunk.(tend)
3. Smaller companies **are** doing better than larger ones. (seem)

4. Mature students do not _____ manage their time better than younger students.
5. The transition from secondary school to university is _____ a difficult one.
6. Physical exercise _____ reduces the symptoms of depression.
7. Statistics _____ that women have fewer accidents than men.
8. It has been _____ that sedentary lifestyles are the main cause of obesity.
9. It _____ fair to conclude that the public health sector has suffered the most from government cuts.
10. Many medical experts _____ argue that assisted suicide can never be justified.

Task 2:

As above. Check your answers with the original statements on the first page.

1. Women are more cautious when driving in built-up areas.
2. Younger men drive dangerously when they have just passed their test.
3. Younger men drive late at night, and this is the reason for the high accident rate.
4. Women are more hesitant when parking.
5. Female drivers are just as capable as male drivers when it comes to parking.
6. There is a link between social media and adolescent depression.
7. A 2005 study concluded that teenage boys who use social media often suffer from low-self esteem.
8. Adolescents lose sleep because of the 'fear of missing out' on social media posts.
9. It is the parent's responsibility to monitor social media use.
10. Too much screen time will affect a child's social skills.

Suggested answers to Task 1

1. Drought **appears to be** the biggest danger in many developing countries.
2. People **tend to be** much more aggressive when they are drunk.
3. Smaller companies **seem to be** doing better than larger ones.
4. Mature students do not **necessarily** manage their time better than younger students.
5. The transition from secondary school to university is **quite** a difficult one.
6. Physical exercise **apparently** reduces the symptoms of depression.
7. Statistics **indicate** that women have fewer accidents than men.
8. It **has been suggested that** sedentary lifestyles are the main cause of obesity.
9. It **seems fair to** conclude that the public health sector has suffered the most from government cuts.
10. Many medical experts **would** argue that assisted suicide can never be justified.