

# HEDGING; TENSES key

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Order these sentences from most categorical to most cautious. How many degrees of certainty/uncertainty are represented?

## 4 degrees of certainty/uncertainty

A reduced speed limit **will** result in fewer highway injuries.

A reduced speed limit **would** result in fewer highway injuries.

A reduced speed limit **may well** result in fewer highway injuries.

A reduced speed limit **could well** result in fewer highway injuries.

A reduced speed limit **might well** result in fewer highway injuries.

A reduced speed limit **may** result in fewer highway injuries.

A reduced speed limit **could** result in fewer highway injuries.

A reduced speed limit **might** result in fewer highway injuries.

Order the following expressions from most to least certain.

1. It is certain that...
2. It is beyond doubt that ...
3. It is almost certain that...
4. It is very probable/highly likely that...
5. It's quite likely that ...
6. It is probable/likely that...
7. It is possible that...
8. It is unlikely that...
9. It is doubtful that ...
10. It is very unlikely/highly improbable that...

Now do the same with these ...

1. There is a strong possibility that...
2. There's a real possibility that ...
3. There is a definite/distinct possibility that...
4. There is a good possibility that... ..
5. There is some possibility that ...
6. There is a slight possibility that ...
7. There is a remote possibility that...
8. There is a negligible possibility that ...
9. There is the remotest of possibilities that ...
10. There is no possibility that ...

**Task 1:** Underline the hedges in the following statements and then reformulate the sentences to make categorical statements.

1. Issues highlighted in this study may be applicable to many higher education institutions across the country. (are applicable)
2. Agreement between the measured and predicted results is reasonably close. (is close)
3. In general, it is difficult to accurately detect the frequencies that have insignificant magnitudes. (It is difficult to accurately detect...)
4. This new technique is claimed by many to be very effective. (This new technique is very effective)
5. The differences between the two approaches appear to be minimal. (The differences are minimal.)

6. Support from the government and the involvement of the private sector might help deliver Internet services to thousands of new users in developing countries. (will help)
7. To the best of my knowledge, nobody blamed the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico on research scientists. (Nobody blamed...)
8. Apparently, poor engineering decisions allowed gas to escape from a well in deep water, which in turn caused a fatal explosion. (Poor engineering decisions...)

**Task 2: Use hedging to make the following statements less categorical. Choose hedges from the list below. There may be more than one correct hedging formula and you may also combine hedge words.**

suggest	would	indicate	seem	often
probably	may	could	tend to	generally

1. The initial results indicate/suggest/seem to suggest/seem to indicate/would seem to suggest/would seem to indicate that our hypothesis was right.
2. This type of sensor may be/seems (to be)/would seem (to be)/is generally suitable for humidity detection.
3. People tend to behave/may behave/often behave/generally behave in accordance with their personal interests and agendas.
4. Certain groups of consumers may react/would seem to react/tend to react/may tend to react to the delays more negatively than others.
5. Another reason could be that the error was due to inaccuracy in the experimental setup.
6. The evidence suggests that these children probably never speak to their parents or grandparents in English.
7. The problem is probably/may be caused by a manufacturing error.
8. This indicates/suggests that gestational iodine status plays a pivotal role in neuro-intellectual development.

**Task 3: Cautious language is commonly found in conclusions. Compare the two conclusions below and underline examples of hedging in the second one.**

This literature review has discussed both the advantages and disadvantages to countries of origin and receiving states of the free movement of labour within EU countries. Whilst the right will ultimately be of benefit to all member states, a transition period during which adjustments to the new circumstances can be made is desirable. It is obviously useful if future policy is informed by the consequences of past practice, and it is therefore worthy of note that the literature which draws on the experience of certain countries at the time of past EU enlargements supports this view. The evidence is not unsubstantial, and a strategy which permits member states, unilaterally, to introduce transition period legislation is the most sensible option. The desirability and workability of such an option, and models for legislation, are the subject of the following study

This literature review has discussed both the potential advantages and disadvantages to countries of origin and receiving states of the free movement of labour within EU countries. Whilst it seems likely that the right will ultimately be of benefit to all member states, a transition period during which adjustments to the new circumstances can be made may well be desirable. It is often useful if future policy is informed by the consequences of past practice, and it may therefore be worthy of note that much of the literature which draws on the experience of certain countries at the time of past EU enlargements appears to support this view. Whilst further research is clearly needed, the body of existing evidence is not unsubstantial, and a strategy which permits member states, unilaterally, to introduce transition period legislation could well be the most sensible option. The desirability and workability of such an option, and possible models for legislation, are the subject of the following study.

## Use of tenses in scientific writing

1. He works for BP. (now, generally, this is his job)
2. He is working for BP. (at the moment)
3. He worked for BP. (in the past, but not now)
4. He was working for BP. (at a certain specified or understood time in the past)
5. He has worked for BP. (at some point in his life, we don't know when, it isn't important, but not now)
6. He has been working for BP. (recently and this is ongoing, the arrangement may be temporary)
7. He had worked for BP. (at a time in the past before another specified or understood time in the past)
8. He had been working for BP. (at a time in the past before another specified or understood time in the past, the working relationship with BP was ongoing/incomplete)
9. He will work for BP. (a prediction or statement of objective future fact)
10. He will be working for BP. (at a certain specified or understood time in the future)
11. He will have worked for BP. (at a time in the future before another specified or understood time in the future)
12. He will have been working for BP. (at a time in the future before another specified or understood time in the future, the working relationship with BP will be ongoing/incomplete)
13. He would work for BP. (... if they offered him a job.)
14. He would be working for BP. (... if he hadn't turned down that job offer)
15. He would have worked for BP. (... if he had had the opportunity, general statement)
16. He would have been working for BP. (if he had had the opportunity, we have a specific past time in mind)

**Task 5:** The following text is part of a report on waterborne diseases. Some verbs and other words (such as 'not', and some adverbs) have been removed. The missing words are shown in brackets. Use either the **SIMPLE PAST** or the **PRESENT PERFECT** and the word(s) in brackets to fill the gaps.

**N.B.** one verb is *not* in the Past or Present Perfect.

### WATERBORNE DISEASES

Cholera and typhoid <sup>1</sup>were (BE) widespread in Europe and North America 100 years ago, but now <sup>2</sup>they have almost disappeared (almost, DISAPPEAR) from the developed world, largely because of improved water supplies and sanitation. However, this <sup>3</sup>has not happened (not, HAPPEN) to the same extent in developing countries. In Peru, for example, where there <sup>4</sup>have been (BE) more than 500 000 cases of cholera since 1991, social expenditure <sup>5</sup>has declined (DECLINE) over the past 10 years and the supply of water to almost 90 per cent of the rural population <sup>6</sup>is (still, BE) grossly contaminated. The World Bank <sup>7</sup>estimated (ESTIMATE) in 1993 that diarrhoea and intestinal worm infections caused by poor water supplies and bad sanitation <sup>8</sup>accounted for (ACCOUNT FOR) as much as 10 per cent of the entire disease burden of developing countries.

The United Nations, recognising that most of the disease <sup>9</sup>was (BE) the result of polluted water supplies, <sup>10</sup>set up (SET UP) a "Decade of Water" from 1981-1990. Its aim <sup>11</sup>was (BE) to provide safe water supplies and adequate sanitation for everyone. Over the decade, the number of people lacking a safe water supply in less well developed countries <sup>12</sup>dropped (DROP) from 1800 million to 1200 million. Although the number of people without lavatories <sup>13</sup>has remained (REMAIN) at around 1700 million, against a continued population increase, this <sup>14</sup>has been (BE) significant progress.