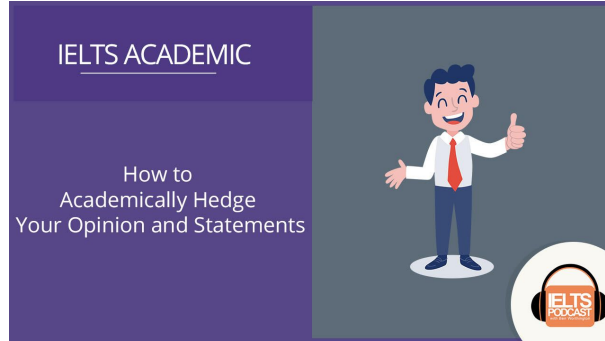# IELTS Podcast

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Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host, Ben Worthington.

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INTRODUCTION

Daphne: Hi, everybody. Daphne here from ieltspodcast.com. Thank you for tuning in again. In this tutorial, I'm going to talk to you **about academic hedging** which is something I talk about in almost every essay I correct. So, once you understand what this is all about, it is a very simple and easy way to upgrade your essay and make it sound not only more academic but more sophisticated as well.

So, you will improve your marks for coherence and cohesion and also this will help you score well for grammatical range and accuracy. So, what more could you want? Here we go. If you have done our amazing Sentence Guide course, which guides you through exactly how to write

these tricky task 2 essays, you may have listened to Ben's final module and he talks about how to make your essays sound more academic using hedging.

WHAT IS HEDGING?

So, in this podcast, we're going to look at what is hedging and why is it so good? So, you probably know what a hedge is. If you don't, **a hedge is a word we use in gardening. It is a row of bushy plants or small trees** which are planted closely in a row **to divide or separate fields one from another. It's usually** said that animals cannot escape, **but we're not using in here for gardening or farming.**

If you think of a hedge like a fence which separates you the writer from a big bold statement that you've just made in your essay, it's by using hedging you're distancing yourself, which makes you sound more academic and not so personally involved. So, we say quite a lot at the time in these essays; don't be too personal. You have to stand away from it. So, it shows that you know what you're saying may not be totally true or that you cannot prove it.

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EXAMPLE #1: EMPLOYMENT

So, let me give you some examples here. So, here's an example from a student essay. Many employees will lose their employment if their workplace changed its location. So, okay. This is fine. It should actually say many employees would lose their employment to keep it all in the past tense, but here we go.

So, this statement reads like a fact. They will lose their jobs if the workplace changes took place, but we cannot know if in reality this is true or false. So, in order to distance ourselves, we can change the word will to a modal verb such as may, might or could indicating we believe this might be possible, but we cannot scientifically prove it. So, the sentence would read: Many employees may lose their employment if their workplace changes its location.

So, this is a more correct sentence. We're saying they may lose their employment. We don't know if they will, but it's a possibility. So, by putting in that modal verb, we are really improving our essay. So, there are two main areas where you can use these modal verbs in your task 2 essays.

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Firstly, when you're talking about the possibility of something happening and of course, the verb you choose will depend on your own personal viewpoint, the argument you're making, and how strongly you feel about that argument. So, the modal verbs you need for this are may, might or could which are all followed by the bare infinitive, that's the infinitive without to.

So, let me run you through some examples which are all from student essays. Improved mobile phone signals positively affect the community and help rural economies to thrive. Okay, my sentence. So, there two verbs here; affect and help and they're both used in the present tense. So, affect the community and help rural economies.

They offer a general opinion, but this isn't supported by any evidence and we cannot know this is 100% true. So, to make this more academic and show the examiner you know this cannot be 100% true, you can hedge simply by adding a modal verb before the main verb. So, our sentence could be improved mobile phone signals might positively affect the community and could help rural economies to thrive.

So, that is a much better sentence; better grammar and showing a more sophisticated writing style. So, the verb affect in this one it depends how strongly you feel, but you could interchange these. So, your sentence could also be improved mobile phone signals could positively affect the community and might help rural economies to thrive.

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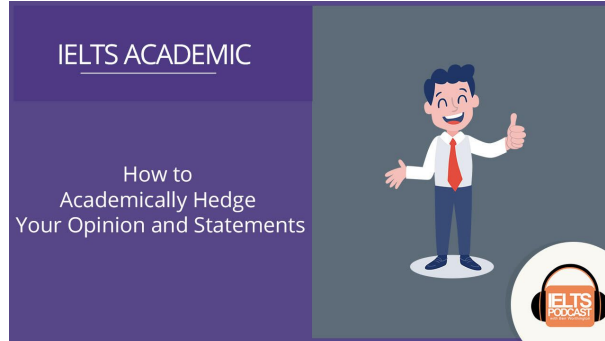
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So, here's another sentence and see how you could change it. Simply by using a translation app, they develop greater interest in traveling independently and shopping locally. Okay, my sentence. No problem with the vocabulary, which is great, but same problem. We don't know for a fact if this is true. Does having a translation app on your phone make you more interested in traveling and shopping? Maybe, maybe not.

So, we can modify this. We qualify it by hedging. So, read it again and you can shout the answer at me. Simply by using a translation app, they develop greater interest in traveling independently and shopping locally. So, my suggestion would be by using these apps, they may develop greater interest in traveling or they might develop greater interest in traveling. That's absolutely fine. Equally, they could develop.

Any of those are all right. They're all good answers and better than just using the present simple with no modal verb. So, as well as discussing the possibility or probability of something, we can use a different range of modal verbs for making suggestions and predictions. So, this is useful for problem solution task 2 essays and in your conclusion or final prediction sentence if you are going to use one.

So, the most appropriate modals for suggesting action are should, ought to, could, might, and need to. So, again these are followed by the infinitive without to. So, let's look at some

examples and the difference in meaning or strength. So, whereas should, might, and could are quite strong, ought to and need to are significantly stronger and would be perfect if you're sure of your ideas and you want to reinforce your opinion.

EXAMPLE #2: OVERCROWDING IN TOWNS

So, here's an example from an essay about overcrowding in towns. The best solution I can think of is for governments to try to encourage people to return to the countryside. So, it's a nice sentence. You're making a suggestions problem-solution essay and you're giving me the solutions.

Let's modify this using the modal ought to which is strong. In my opinion, government ought to encourage people to return to the countryside. So, ought to shows rigor grammar, obviously. It sounds more sophisticated. It adds strength to the power of your idea and you are making a strong suggestion. So, in that problem-solution essay, that is a very good way of putting your suggestions.

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EXAMPLE #3: FOOD POVERTY

So, here's another one from an essay on food poverty. So, one suggestion is for politicians to provide poorer countries with the skills to feed themselves. Okay. So, we can improve or upgrade this using should. So, they've said one suggestion is for politicians to provide. So, we could say many critics argue that because that also distances you. It sounds more academic, doesn't it than one suggestion. Many critics argue that politicians should provide, not for politicians to provide. So, politicians should provide poorer countries with the skills to feed themselves.

Now, my next question is going to develop this a little bit. So, my next question immediately would be how. So, in order to score really well on your essay, you need to develop all these arguments. So, you can make a statement like that. That's fine, but you need to tell me how that would work. So, literally I'm going to add here by education or grants to buy farming equipment. So, then immediately I said yes, the politicians are going to provide poor countries with skills, but I'm telling you now what these skills or what this help is going to be.

So, my sentence would be many critics argue that politicians should provide poorer countries with the skills to feed themselves by education or grants to buy farming equipment. If you use

this hedging language and then you make sure that you're developing your sentence really nicely and fully, the examiner can't ask you any more questions.
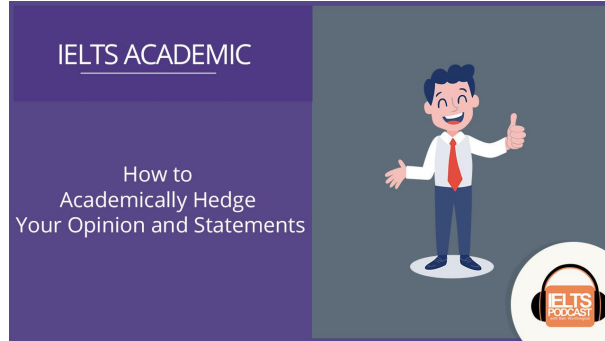
You have absolutely done what you had to do. [Task achievement](); done it. Grammar; done it and also this has some nice vocabulary in there as well. You see how these essays just with building up little grammar tweaks, grammar improvements, little vocabulary, a little bit of extra words and all this develops the essay really, really nicely.

EXAMPLE #4: ENVIRONMENT

So, here's a couple more from the [environment]() and environment, as you know, is a really hot topic at the moment. It's a great area for essay writing because there are so many fantastic words you can use; great vocabulary. I think that planting more trees is the best option. That's your suggestion. Okay, fine, but better instead of going I think environmentalists believe that more trees should be planted.

So, we're using the modal verb should rather than planting trees is the best option, but even better we're going to put this in the passive tense. So, should be planted and that every country needs to focus its resources on saving our planet. So, if you are not happy on the passive tense, have a look at that because it's really useful for the task 1 process diagrams and especially my

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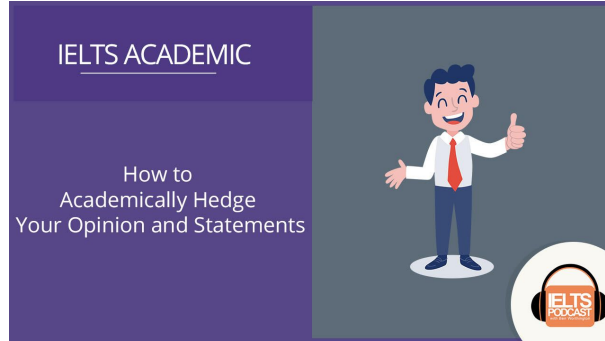Click here for IELTS Materials (free)

favorite which are the maps, which don't come up very often, but they do come up sometimes. So, it's worth being confident on doing a [map question](#) if you're doing the [academic task 1](#), but here we go.

So, let's look at this a bit closer. Environmentalists believe that more trees should be planted. So, we've got our modal verb should, we've got the infinitive which is be, and then we've got planted which is the past participle. So, we've got a passive-- well, a modal and then passive infinitive. So, super high marks on the grammar. That's looking really good and every country needs to focus its resources on saving our planet.

So, should is more like a suggestion and need is more urgent. This must happen. So, in that sentence, you've got two modal verbs, different strengths, you're using them correctly and it's a really nice way to use a good complex sentence in this kind of essay.

So, when it comes to writing a prediction, I know Ben has a module in the course on writing a prediction which is a nice kind of final line of your conclusion, but I find reading a lot of essays that sometimes this feels like it's thrown in or quick I need to write a prediction. I'm just going to throw in a prediction at the end and sometimes it doesn't connect very well to the rest of the essay and it really does sound that you just thought oh, quick quick. Make a prediction at the end.

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So, it's important that the prediction matches what you've been saying. So, it's going to come from the points you've just probably made in the sentence before or made during your conclusion. So, using a modal verb here such as may, might, could, or even would instead of will because will is the word we use most often to use a future indication. So, if we use may, might, could, or would, this slightly softens the prediction and shows the examiner you know it's only a prediction. It may not come true. We don't know. We do not have a crystal ball we say to look into the future.

So, here are a few examples. Instead of translation apps will be used more in the future, okay, for me that's a very kind of blunt sentence. It's not very kind of-- it's just a bit basic really. My suggestion would be it is possible and indeed quite likely that translation apps or we should say actually, the popularity or use of translation apps may grow in importance and relevance in the coming years.

So, we can either say it's possible and indeed quite likely that the use of translation apps may grow in importance and relevance in the future or we can just say that translation apps may grow in importance and relevance in the coming years or future. So, we're saying rather than they will be used, we're saying that their popularity may grow, their significance may grow. We don't know, but this is our intelligent guess.

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So, a prediction really is an intelligent guess and this is an example from an essay on working hours. In the future, legislating on maximum working hours for adolescents will fundamentally address the concern. Now, that may be true, but we don't know if there is any legislation happening on this, we don't know which country, we don't know if it would work or not.

So, if you simply change will for would, so it would go: In the future, legislating on maximum working hours for adolescents would fundamentally address the concern. It suggests this is a hypothetical idea. So, would we use quite often in conditional sentences or hypothetical. So, they're unreal sentences. So, you could simply just change will for would and this hedging, we're still hedging, shows you cannot know if the idea would work-- the legislation would work, but you think it's a good idea and has a chance that it might.

So, in this episode-- in this podcast, we have talked about using modal verbs for academic hedging and that distances you from some of the big statements in your essay which you cannot know to be true. So, this is a really useful technique for your task 2s and will help you score highly on coherence and cohesion as well as grammatical range and can even help you with your task achievement.

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FINAL TIP FROM DAPHNE

So, please try practicing this in your next essays. I will look out to read for reading them and really good luck with writing and with all your hard work for this exam. **Getting feedback is a great way to improve.** Please have a look at the course online which is fantastic and we are all here to help you with your essay corrections which, as all our students say, **they really enjoy getting the feedback and that** helps them to improve. So, good luck with all your writing and thank you for listening to this podcast from ieltspodcast.com See you next time.

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