

Timed Writing 4

Audience

One of the first steps in all writing is to recognize your audience. When you are thinking about your audience, it may help to ask yourself some questions.

- *Who will be reading?*
- *What does the reader need to know?*
- *In what context (where) is the reader connecting with your writing?*
- *When (under what conditions) would this information be important for the reader?*
- *Why would the reader be reading this?*
- *How will you most effectively express the information to this audience?*

Unfortunately, many college writers simply write because it is a required task and do not think carefully about the audience. If you were to ask a student working on an essay about their audience, you would most likely hear the simple response "My professor" or "The TA, I guess." While it may be true that the paper will only be read by the instructor for the course, do not assume that you can ignore the question of audience. These questions about the intention of your audience are equally valuable when considering your instructor.

If you receive a writing assignment that does not provide a specific audience, you can work with the assignment description, rubric, and your knowledge of the instructor to understand your audience. Ask yourself some additional questions like the following:

- *What knowledge or skill is the instructor evaluating through this assignment?*
- *What information do I not need to address directly because it is foundational (or too basic) for this specific assignment?*
- *How do the rubric categories and possible points indicate what is important to the reader?*
- *Were any example essays provided?*
- *What real-life situation does this particular writing assignment prepare me for?*

Thinking through your audience before you write can help you frame an effective thesis statement and choose supporting details that would have the greatest impact on your reader.

To use an analogy, considering your audience for writing is like going to a tailor. Many times you can buy clothes from the store and wear them exactly as they were sold. There may be small problems with the fit, but you can still wear them. However, spending a little extra time and money to have the too-long pants altered to fit your height can be worth it. And there are times when the occasion for the clothes (such as a nice dress or a suit) is more formal or important and that extra effort is of greater value. Similarly, there are times when a "one size fits all" essay will be fine, and there are times when that extra attention to your audience will make a big impact on the final outcome.

Register

Continuing with the clothing analogy, different situations have different social expectations for dress code. The dress code at BYU is more strict than the outfit expectations at a birthday party. And there are obvious differences between what you wear to the gym and what you wear as a guest to a wedding.

Register is the word used to describe the language differences we notice in different contexts. There are differences between written and spoken English, and there are many differences in the language we use depending on our audience. Here are some writing register differences you may have noticed:

- When you use contractions (informal writing)
- When you use acronyms like TBH or IDK (texting, social media)
- When you use hedging (formal writing)

Adjusting the words and phrases you write depending on your audience is likely a strategy you already use without thinking about it too carefully. In this section, you will learn a little more about the strategy of hedging.

Hedging

A simple definition of linguistic hedging in academic writing is to phrase a point carefully to soften a point. This is common in college writing because hedging acknowledges that the writer is not an expert. You are reporting what you have learned, but you allow for correction.

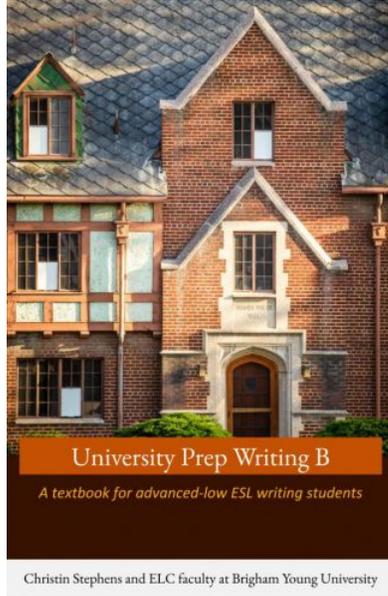
Here are some examples of how hedges can be used in writing

Hedge type	Examples	Hedging examples
Verbs:	appear, seem, suggest, argue, claim, tend, believe, think, looks like, assume, consider, indicate	<u>Many</u> people <u>assume</u> that...
Modals:	may, might, could, can	<u>Based on</u> this evidence, it is <u>possible</u> that...
Adjectives:	likely, unlikely, probable, possible, some, many, much	<u>Generally</u> speaking, this does not <u>seem</u> to <u>be</u> the <u>case</u> ...
Adverbs:	probably, not necessarily, potentially, perhaps, apparently, evidently, presumably, relatively, occasionally, sometimes, generally, usually, often, seldom	<u>According to</u> lead researchers, this <u>may</u> change...
Phrases:	based on, according to, in light of, in the view of, it could be the case that, to some extent, when compared to, in the context of, in certain situations, as shown/indicated by	<u>Often</u> opponents <u>claim</u> that...

1 Exercise: Timed Writing (Hedging Focus)

Write for 30 minutes about the following topic. Use one hedging word from each of the hedge type categories above to soften your claims.

1. Your boss sent you an email about a higher position that is now open in the company. He asks if you are interested in the position. After looking at the job description, you want to respond that you are not interested in this job. However, you want your boss to think of you for other jobs in the future. Respond to his email with a short explanation (1-2 paragraphs) of why this job is not interesting to you, but you would like to be considered in the future.
2. People sometimes say that a job interview is more about you checking that the position is a good fit for you than it is about the employer checking that you are a good fit for the position. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your position.
3. In 1 year, you receive a message from one of your former UP classmates. Your classmate asks you to peer review a final essay for her class. You read through the draft, and you find some significant organizational problems. Write an email to your classmate giving suggestions on how to improve her writing.



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