**Hedges (*just*)**

We use hedges to soften what we say or write. Hedges are an important part of polite conversation. They make what we say less direct. The most common forms of hedging involve tense and aspect, modal expressions including modal verbs and adverbs, vague language such as *sort of* and *kind of*, and some verbs.

Tense and aspect

*I****wondered****if I could have a word with you?* (less direct and more polite than *Could I have a word with you?*)

Modal expressions

*The answer****could****be that the trees have some sort of disease.* (less direct than *The answer* ***is*** *that* …)

***Maybe****we should have a word with him about it?* (less direct than *We should* or *we must have a word with him about it*.)

*This is****possibly****the best performance in the Olympics.*

Vague language

*It’s****sort of****difficult to say.* (less direct than *It’s difficult to say*)

*Could you****just****post this letter for me?*

Verbs (*feel*)

Some verbs (such as *feel*, *suppose*, *reckon*) can be used to hedge personal statements, that is, to make personal statements less direct:

*We****feel****he should let them decide whether to buy the flat.* (less direct than *He should let them decide* …)

*I****reckon****that’s the best answer to the problem.* (less direct than *That’s the best answer to the problem*.)

Hedges in academic writing

We use certain types of hedging in writing, especially in academic writing, so that statements don’t seem to rely simply on personal opinion.

We often use structures with *it* in the passive such as *it is argued that* and *it has been agreed that*:

***It has been generally agreed that****these new video phone technologies will transform everyday life.* (a more cautious and less personal statement than *I agree that* …)