

## Modal Verbs, Reporting Verbs and Transition Words

GRS Writing Group – WED 14 JUN

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*Relying on simple dictionary definitions, however, is not always a useful strategy for expressing a writer's stance towards a claim. The reason, as de Beaugrande (2001) argues, is that there is sometimes a disconnect between the meanings of words found in a dictionary and how they are commonly used in actual rhetorical contexts.*

- Bloch. 2010. A concordance-based study of the use of reporting verbs as rhetorical devices in academic papers. *Journal of Writing Research* 2 (2):219.



What resources do you use to help you improve your academic writing?

Have they been helpful in guiding more subtle choices in your academic writing?

### Modal Verbs

Very strong claims are rare in academic writing. Instead, 'hedging' is used to reduce the strength of claims and indicate to the reader the probability that the writer gives to the claim being 'the truth'. A range of words and phrases can be used in hedging, including modal verbs. Modal verbs are used most commonly in discussions. Modal verbs range from strong to tentative.

### Reporting Verbs

Another way of indicating the strength of a claim is the use of reporting verbs. Reporting verbs can be used to report your claims, the claims of others, or demonstrate how you feel about the claims of others. Reporting verbs differ in terms of their strength, from strong to tentative.

### Transition Words

Transition words allow the reader to understand how ideas connect together. Usually connections between sentences are made by repetition of a word in the previous sentence. Transition words can be used to better communicate the relationship between the sentences.

When transition words are redundant, or the incorrect transition word is used, or multiple sentences within a paragraph include transition words, or transitions between paragraphs are too simple, they can be very misleading to the reader.



- University of Adelaide – Verbs for reporting. Used for referring to the work of other researchers and the options available for indicating how strongly you support this work.  
<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/docs/learningguide-verbsforreporting.docx>
- James Cook University – Reporting Verbs  
[https://www.jcu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/104215/jcu\\_131158.pdf](https://www.jcu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/104215/jcu_131158.pdf)
- University of Wollongong. UniLearning. Modal Verbs and adverbs. Useful for ‘hedging’ – indicating the degree of certainty of your conclusions.  
[https://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/4aiii\\_2.html](https://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/4aiii_2.html)
- University of Ottawa. Academic Writing Help Centre. Transition words.  
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/transitions/>



- University of Melbourne Voice in Academic Writing  
[http://services.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/471298/Voice\\_in\\_Academic\\_Writing\\_Update\\_051112.pdf](http://services.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/471298/Voice_in_Academic_Writing_Update_051112.pdf)
- Newcastle University – Hedging  
<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc/learning/language/hedging.htm>
- Explorations of Style. Transitions. Advice on taking care to use transitions appropriately.  
<https://explorationsofstyle.com/2011/02/23/transitions/>

Next session: JUN 28 Managing Drafts and Coordinating Feedback

Further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group, including advice sheets to download, here:  
[www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup](http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup)