How Scientists Hedge

Use scientific hedging to name the limits of a result, rather than adding vague uncertainty everywhere.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a strong claim and evidence with a clear limitation.

Teach it in four steps

1. Use scientific hedging to name the limits of a result, rather than adding vague uncertainty everywhere.
2. Locate a limit: sample, time, source perspective or uncontrolled factor.
3. Add a qualifier that names that limit.
4. Compare with vague hedging and keep the more informative wording.

Worked example: How Scientists Hedge

“The results suggest a relationship in these trials, but the small sample limits how confidently we can generalise.” This is more useful than repeatedly adding maybe.

Teacher prompt: “What does the evidence establish, and where is its limit?”

Check understanding

Give a new limitation and ask for a qualifier that names it precisely.

Fade the support

Remove the qualifier list; learners decide whether and how the evidence needs qualification.

Adapt it across subjects

Science: distinguish a supported result from a general law. Humanities: qualify what one source can establish.

Adjust the language support

A1-A2 access: keep the subject goal; use visuals, a small word bank, pointing or drawing and partner rehearsal. Use a home language to establish meaning where helpful.

B1-B2 extension: ask for fuller explanations, precise subject vocabulary and qualifications. Reduce sentence openings when learners can organise the response independently.

These are starting points, not placement rules. Judge support from the learner’s response to this task; proficiency can differ across skills.