UNIT 3B · BUSINESS C1

Speaking softly, deciding hard

Class Book and Workbook · one complete unit

OBJECTIVES

What you'll be able to do

4 min

- Deploy the C1 register of decisive uncertainty — hedges that price a claim without abandoning it.
- Distinguish over-claiming and under-claiming as failure modes of leadership speech.
- Commit publicly to a direction while keeping the confidence interval visible.
- Recognise your own defaults under pressure and modify one of them.

LEAD-IN

Rank the sentences

8 min

FRAME · A LEADER MID-SENTENCE

On your own, rank the following five statements — a CEO on the same Q3 forecast — from most brittle to most credible. Then write one sentence explaining your top pick.

- "Q3 will be up 8%. I'll bet the quarter on it."
- "There are, as ever, many ways to read the pipeline; we'll see what Q3 brings."
- "My base case is Q3 up 6–9%. I'd hazard a guess we come in at the top of that range, though I'd want another two weeks of pipeline data before I'd bet the plan on it."
- "Q3 might be up. Or it might not. It's hard to say."
- "Q3 is going to be a strong quarter. Trust me."

Now identify which one over-claims, which one under-claims, and why (3) is doing something the other four aren't.

READING

The paradox of the confident hedge

15 min

For most of the twentieth century, the standard advice to executives who wanted to project authority was, in effect: strip the hedges. Do not say 'perhaps'; do not say 'it may be that'; do not, above all, admit that the forecast has a confidence interval wider than the number itself. The theory was that hedges leaked strength and that a leader's job was, in part, theatrical.

The theory was wrong in a way that has become obvious only recently. Leaders who removed the hedges from their sentences did not become more trusted; they became more brittle. The first time the numbers failed to arrive as promised — and, in a complex organisation, this is a matter of when, not whether — the false certainty of the earlier statement collapsed loudly, and took the leader's credit with it. Meanwhile, the leaders who had been hedging all along — quietly, precisely, in the technical register of their own discipline — were still there in the room, still trusted, and, oddly, still perceived as decisive.

The mechanism turns out to be well understood. A hedge is not a signal of weakness; it is a signal of calibration. A leader who says 'my base case is X, though I'd want another quarter of data before I'd bet the company on it' is telling the room two things at once: this is my direction, and this is the confidence I hold in it. That second sentence is the one that keeps the leader's credibility intact when the direction, in due course, needs adjusting.

The C1 register for this — the vocabulary of decisive uncertainty — is unusually rich in English. It has a whole family of qualifiers ('arguably', 'on balance', 'as far as one can tell'), a whole family of tentative diagnostics ('I wonder if', 'it may be that', 'one reading of this would be that'), and a whole family of retrospective softeners ('with the benefit of hindsight', 'in fairness', 'granted, though'). Leaders who reach for these fluently are not weakening their claims; they are pricing them.

The only category of leader for whom the old advice still holds is the leader whose numbers never miss. If you can find one, hire them. If you cannot, teach yourself the register.

Choose the best answer.

- The 'twentieth-century advice' the writer criticises was, in effect:
  (a) hedge more
  (b) strip the hedges to project authority
  (c) delegate the numbers
  (d) prepare a longer memo
  Answer key: (b) strip the hedges to project authority
- The consequence of stripped hedges, per the writer, is that leaders become:
  (a) more decisive
  (b) more brittle when the numbers fail to arrive
  (c) more efficient
  (d) more admired
  Answer key: (b) more brittle when the numbers fail to arrive
- A hedge, correctly understood, is a signal of:
  (a) weakness
  (b) calibration
  (c) politeness
  (d) deference
  Answer key: (b) calibration
- The 'second sentence' the writer refers to — 'this is the confidence I hold in it' — is important because it:
  (a) shortens the memo
  (b) keeps the leader's credibility intact when direction needs adjusting
  (c) makes the leader more likeable
  (d) moves the meeting along
  Answer key: (b) keeps the leader's credibility intact when direction needs adjusting
- The only leader for whom the old advice still holds, the writer says, is:
  (a) the CEO
  (b) the CFO
  (c) the leader whose numbers never miss
  (d) the founder
  Answer key: (c) the leader whose numbers never miss

Teacher notes

Follow-up: Choose one sentence from the text you would keep as a laminated card and identify a specific meeting in the next fortnight where you would deploy it.

AUTHENTIC READING · REAL TEXT

Julian Treasure on how leaders sound when they're worth listening to

Source: Adapted from Julian Treasure, 'How to speak so that people want to listen' (TED, 2013) and 'How to be Heard' (Mango, 2017) · Excerpted for classroom use under fair-dealing for educational commentary.

C1+

≈ 380 words

Sound consultant Julian Treasure has, for a decade, made the case that the vocal habits of leadership are more learnable than most leaders assume. Read this adapted synthesis and answer the questions.

Julian Treasure's argument, made in the language of an acoustician rather than an executive coach, is that the vocal habits that make a leader worth listening to are not, as commonly assumed, gifts of nature. They are, to a much greater degree than most C-suites believe, a matter of practised default settings — the tone, pace, register, and pitch a speaker reaches for automatically when the pressure is on.

The habit that most reliably distinguishes the leaders his firm has coached, he argues, is not volume, or timbre, or even pace. It is the willingness to modulate the confidence in the voice separately from the confidence in the direction. Leaders who under-modulate — whose voice sounds equally certain about the strategy and about the Q3 forecast — will, over the course of a year, be judged as either arrogant or unreliable. Leaders who over-modulate — whose voice hedges before the sentence has finished — will be judged as tentative. The narrow band between the two is where trust accumulates.

Treasure's linguistic recommendations, unusually for the genre, are technical. He recommends against 'up-talk' at the end of declarative sentences, on the grounds that it converts a claim into an implicit question the leader does not, in fact, want to ask. He recommends the use of what he calls the 'downward final' — the small drop in pitch at the end of a sentence — which the human ear reads as certainty. And he recommends, crucially, that both of these habits be paired with the C1 vocabulary of decisive uncertainty: 'my base case is...', 'on balance...', 'I'd want another quarter of data before...'.

The pairing is important. A leader who uses the downward final without the C1 vocabulary sounds like a person who has never been wrong; a leader who uses the C1 vocabulary without the downward final sounds like a person who does not trust their own analysis. The two together — a firm cadence carrying an honest confidence interval — is the register the room, correctly, reads as authority.

Treasure is honest that the habit is expensive to acquire. It takes, he estimates, about six weeks of daily practice to make the register a default rather than a performance. Most leaders, he adds, decide it is too much work, and continue to sound roughly the way they always have. The exceptions, over five years, tend to end up in the corner office.

1. READ FOR GIST

- 1. What is Treasure's central claim about vocal leadership habits?
  Answer key: They are practised default settings, not gifts of nature — and are more learnable than most leaders assume.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- 2. What is the habit that most reliably distinguishes trusted leaders, per Treasure?
  Answer key: The willingness to modulate the confidence in the voice separately from the confidence in the direction.

2. READ FOR DETAIL

- 1. Why is 'up-talk' a leadership problem, per Treasure?
  Answer key: It converts a claim into an implicit question the leader does not, in fact, want to ask.
- 2. Why does the 'downward final' need to be paired with C1 vocabulary?
  Answer key: Alone, it makes the speaker sound as if they've never been wrong; alone, C1 vocabulary makes them sound as if they don't trust their analysis. Together, they read as authority.
- 3. What is the practical time cost of acquiring the register, per Treasure?
  Answer key: About six weeks of daily practice, to make it a default rather than a performance.
- 4. Why, per the writer, do most leaders never acquire it?
  Answer key: They decide it is too much work and continue to sound as they always have.

3. GLOSSARY

downward final

the small drop in pitch at the end of a sentence that the ear reads as certainty

up-talk

rising intonation at the end of a declarative that converts it into an implicit question

default settings (vocal)

the tone, pace and register a speaker reaches for automatically under pressure

narrow band

the space between over-modulating (tentative) and under-modulating (brittle)

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- Which of your vocal defaults would a coach diagnose as costing you authority?
- Where does 'up-talk' still appear in your speech under pressure?
- How would you know, six weeks from now, whether the register had become a default?

5. WRITING TASK · DISCURSIVE

Write a 200–240-word memo to your team announcing a difficult decision, in the register of decisive uncertainty.

- State the direction in the first two sentences; do not hedge the direction.
- Then make the confidence interval visible, in language ('on balance', 'my base case is', 'I'd want another quarter of data before…').
- End with the two specific signals that could re-open the question in ninety days.

Write at least 200 words.

VOCABULARY

The register of decisive uncertainty

12 min

Match each term to its definition.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- hedge
  a linguistic move that reduces the strength of a claim without abandoning it
- epistemic modality
  the grammar of how confident you are in what you're saying
- commit-and-hedge
  state the direction firmly, then qualify the confidence level
- false certainty
  the leader's habit of over-claiming to look decisive
- operational room
  the space a hedged statement leaves for the team to challenge it
- confidence interval
  the honest range around a point estimate — spoken or numerical
- tentative diagnostic
  a hedged verb (I wonder if, it may be that) that opens a question without leading it
- decisive uncertainty
  the C1 register that decides and, simultaneously, names its own uncertainty

Complete each sentence with a word from the box.

- A good leader doesn't remove the confidence interval_ from a forecast; she names it and decides anyway.
- 'I wonder if the churn signal is actually a pricing signal' is a classic tentative diagnostic_ .
- The problem with the CEO's Q1 memo wasn't the direction — it was the false certainty_ , which the numbers couldn't support.
- A hedged sentence, done well, leaves operational room_ for the team to push back without insubordination.
- 'That is my read, though I hold it lightly' is a textbook hedge_ .
- What the board wants from a C1 leader is not certainty — it is decisive uncertainty_ .

Choose the best answer.

- 'Epistemic modality' is the grammar of:
  (a) politeness
  (b) how confident you are in what you're saying
  (c) verb tense
  (d) sentence length
  Answer key: (b) how confident you are in what you're saying
- The pattern 'commit-and-hedge' is:
  (a) hedge first, then commit
  (b) state the direction firmly, then qualify the confidence
  (c) avoid committing at all
  (d) commit in public, hedge in private
  Answer key: (b) state the direction firmly, then qualify the confidence
- 'False certainty' most damages a leader when:
  (a) it makes them look strong once
  (b) the numbers, in due course, contradict the claim
  (c) it shortens the meeting
  (d) it impresses the board briefly
  Answer key: (b) the numbers, in due course, contradict the claim

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- A tentative diagnostic is best used to:
  (a) end a discussion
  (b) open a difficult question without leading the room to the answer
  (c) signal weakness
  (d) buy time
  Answer key: (b) open a difficult question without leading the room to the answer

LISTENING

Held lightly

12 min

A CEO opens a Q3 review with an explicitly hedged position. Read the transcript (audio coming soon) and answer.

CEO (RAFA): Alright — my read of Q3, held lightly. Priya, jump in when I overreach.

CPO (PRIYA): Understood.

RAFA: My base case is that enterprise is the growth channel — arguably the only one that can carry the plan we owe the board in November. On balance, I'd want to slow consumer marketing spend by about a quarter, and redirect the difference. That is my read; the confidence I hold in it is medium, no higher.

PRIYA: A tentative pushback — I wonder if the churn signal in the consumer cohort last month is being over-read. It's one month.

RAFA: Fair. It's one month. So — restated: my base case is enterprise, hedged on the churn signal, which we'd want to see hold for another cycle before we bet the quarter on it.

CFO (SAM): I'd hazard a guess that the market gives us one bad quarter to reshape the P&L, no more. So the decisive uncertainty here is not 'shall we reshape'; it's 'how much room do we allow the team to challenge it in the next thirty days'.

RAFA: Agreed. So — commit publicly to the direction; keep the confidence interval visible internally. Priya, that means your team hears 'enterprise is the priority, and here are the two signals that could re-open the question in ninety days'. Not 'enterprise is the priority, full stop'.

PRIYA: That I can work with.

Choose the best answer.

- Rafa opens with 'held lightly' because he wants to:
  (a) appear humble
  (b) signal the confidence level of the claim upfront
  (c) delay the meeting
  (d) protect Priya
  Answer key: (b) signal the confidence level of the claim upfront
- Priya's 'tentative pushback' is:
  (a) insubordinate
  (b) an operational use of the room the hedge created
  (c) a delaying tactic
  (d) a face-saving move
  Answer key: (b) an operational use of the room the hedge created

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- Sam reframes the meeting's decisive uncertainty as:
  (a) whether to reshape
  (b) how much room the team has to challenge the reshape over 30 days
  (c) whether to fire the CMO
  (d) whether to raise a round
  Answer key: (b) how much room the team has to challenge the reshape over 30 days
- Rafa's closing instruction to Priya distinguishes:
  (a) public certainty vs internal confidence interval
  (b) written vs spoken communication
  (c) board vs team
  (d) strategy vs tactics
  Answer key: (a) public certainty vs internal confidence interval

Teacher notes

Extension: Ask the student to re-deliver Rafa's opening in three registers — over-claiming, under-claiming, and the version in the transcript. Which one moves the room?

AUTHENTIC LISTENING · REAL VOICES

Adam Grant on 'confident humility' — how the best leaders speak

Source: Adapted from Adam Grant, 'Think Again' (Viking, 2021) and TED interviews · Excerpted for classroom use under fair-dealing for educational commentary.

C1+

▯ ≈ 3 min excerpt

Wharton's Adam Grant argues that the most persuasive leaders combine strong opinions with visible willingness to update them. Listen for the register — and the specific verbs he uses to model it.

Faixa em produção. O player aparece aqui — o áudio será publicado em breve. Enquanto isso, use o script completo abaixo.

1. LISTEN FOR GIST

- 1. What are the two failure modes Grant identifies?
  Answer key: Over-claiming (short-term authority, long-term erosion of trust) and under-claiming (no visible direction).
- 2. What is his one-line definition of the register that works?
  Answer key: Confident in the direction; humble about the level of certainty.

2. LISTEN FOR DETAIL

- 1. What is the part 'most leaders skip', per Grant?
  Answer key: Making it easy for someone in the room to move the confidence interval with new evidence.
- 2. Why does he recommend learning the vocabulary 'by ear rather than by rule'?
  Answer key: Because the phrases are stylistic reflexes; they need to be automatic under pressure.
- 3. What is the audible difference the phrases prove the speaker knows?
  Answer key: The difference between having an opinion and being right.

3. GLOSSARY

confident humility

Grant's term: strong opinion + visible openness to revise it

over-claim / under-claim

the two failure modes of leaders speaking under uncertainty

confidence interval (spoken)

the audible range of certainty around a claim

base case

the most likely scenario in a leader's head, stated as such

FULL SCRIPT

The evidence, such as it is, on how leaders speak under uncertainty tells a fairly consistent story. Leaders who over-claim in the meeting — no hedges, no qualifiers, straight-line predictions — get a short-term bump in perceived authority and a long-term erosion of trust, because reality catches up with the claim. Leaders who under-claim, hedging so heavily that the direction disappears, get, if anything, a worse outcome: the room concludes, uncharitably but reasonably, that they don't actually have a read.

The register that works, and this is the finding I would tentatively suggest matters most for people who lead in complex environments, is what I've come to call confident humility. Confident in the direction; humble about the level of certainty. Phrased differently: commit publicly to the call, keep the confidence interval visible internally, and — this is the part most leaders skip — make it easy for someone in the room to move the confidence interval by presenting a piece of evidence you hadn't weighted.

The vocabulary for this in English is unusually rich, and it is worth learning by ear rather than by rule. 'My base case is...' 'I'd hazard a guess that...' 'On balance...' 'I wonder if the churn signal is actually a pricing signal.' These aren't stylistic flourishes. They are the audible proof that the speaker knows the difference between having an opinion and being right.

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- In your last team meeting, did you over-claim or under-claim?
- Which of Grant's four phrases would you plausibly say tomorrow, unrehearsed?
- What does 'making it easy for someone in the room to move the confidence interval' actually look like on your team?

GRAMMAR

Hedging & tentative language — the C1 palette

18 min

Epistemic modals: may (well), might, could well — 'It may well be that...' / 'This could well be a pricing problem.'

Tentative diagnostic verbs: I wonder if, I would tentatively suggest that, one reading of this would be that.

Confidence adverbials: arguably, on balance, in fairness, tentatively, as far as I can tell.

Bracket phrases: such as it is, for what it's worth, held lightly, subject to more data.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

Commit-and-hedge scaffold: [Direction, firm] + [confidence, named] + [the signal that would move me].

The C1 speaker does not hedge to sound polite; they hedge to price the claim. The scaffold is: commit calibrate identify the falsifier.

Choose the correct option.

- ____ the enterprise cohort is where the growth actually is.
  (a) It may well be that
  (b) It may well is that
  (c) It may be well that
  (d) May it well be that
  Answer key: (a) It may well be that
- ____ the two effects are unrelated; the correlation is thin.
  (a) I would tentatively suggest that
  (b) I would tentatively suggested that
  (c) I tentative would suggest that
  (d) I would tentative suggest that
  Answer key: (a) I would tentatively suggest that
- The margin compression is, ____ , priced in already.
  (a) arguably
  (b) arguable
  (c) argue
  (d) in argue
  Answer key: (a) arguably
- ____ a slower launch would have been the wiser call.
  (a) On balance
  (b) On balancing
  (c) In balance
  (d) By balance
  Answer key: (a) On balance
- That, ____ , is what the data appears to support.
  (a) as far as I can tell
  (b) as far as I could telling
  (c) so far I can tell
  (d) as far I tell
  Answer key: (a) as far as I can tell
- I'd ____ this is a demand problem rather than a supply one.
  (a) hazard a guess that
  (b) hazard the guess that
  (c) hazard to guess that
  (d) hazard for a guess
  Answer key: (a) hazard a guess that
- The evidence, ____ , points in one direction only.
  (a) such as it is
  (b) such it is
  (c) as such it is
  (d) so such it is
  Answer key: (a) such as it is

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- ____ , we're seeing the churn stabilise — but a month is a month.
  (a) Tentatively
  (b) Tentative
  (c) In tentative
  (d) As tentative
  Answer key: (a) Tentatively

Complete each hedge.

- Soften without abandoning: 'This is the growth channel.' This may well be_ may well be_ the growth channel.
- Own the read: 'It's a demand problem.' I'd hazard a guess that_ hazard a guess that_ this is a demand problem.
- Commit-and-hedge: 'The launch should be delayed.' on balance_ on balance_ the launch should be delayed.
- Diagnostic opener: 'The pricing is the real issue.' I wonder if_ wonder if_ the pricing is the real issue.
- Epistemic hedge on evidence: 'The data is limited.' The evidence, such as it is_ such as it is_ such as it is_ , is limited.

Discursive practice:

DESCRIBE THE SITUATION

Look at the picture and use the grammar you just studied

You are the leader in the frame. Write the next 5–6 sentences she says, using at least three different hedge structures and the commit-and-hedge scaffold.

TRY TO USE

My base case is…

It may well be that…

On balance…

I'd hazard a guess that…

…subject to another quarter of data.

The signal that would move me is…

SAMPLE ANSWER

Right — the number on the screen. My base case is that we hit the middle of the range, no higher. It may well be that the pipeline strength you're seeing in Q3 is a pull-forward from Q4 rather than genuine acceleration; I'd want another cycle of data before I'd bet the plan on it. On balance, I'd hazard a guess that we come in at the top of the confidence interval, but not above it — and I'm holding that lightly. The signal that would move me, in either direction, is the second-order effect on the enterprise pipeline in the next fortnight. If that softens, we tighten spend; if it holds, we push. Not before.

VIDEO LESSON · REAL SPEAKERS

Adam Grant — The power of thinking again

Source: Adam Grant · TED

C1+

14 min

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

Adam Grant on why the leaders who update their views most publicly are — counter-intuitively — the ones the room most trusts.

Watch once for gist, then again pausing on the questions below. Use the original on YouTube for subtitles if needed.

1. WATCH FOR GIST

- 1. Grant's central provocation is that:
  Answer key: The willingness to be wrong in public is a leadership asset, not a liability.
- 2. His one-line register is:
  Answer key: Confident in the direction; humble about the level of certainty.
- 3. The part most leaders skip is:
  Answer key: Making it easy for someone in the room to move the confidence interval with new evidence.

2. WATCH FOR DETAIL

- 1. Why does over-claiming erode long-term trust?
  Answer key: Because reality catches up with the claim, and the false certainty collapses loudly.
- 2. Why is under-claiming a worse failure mode than most leaders realise?
  Answer key: The room concludes, uncharitably but reasonably, that the leader has no read.
- 3. What is Grant's evidence-standard for changing his own mind?
  Answer key: New information that would move a specific, pre-committed threshold — not the volume of the disagreement.

3. KEY LANGUAGE

confident humility

strong opinion + visible willingness to revise it

rethink cycle

the habitual moment a leader schedules to update a strategic assumption

identity vs opinion

the difference between what I think and who I am — the former is negotiable

falsifier

the specific evidence that would move the claim

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- When did you last update a public position — and did you say so out loud?
- Which of your current claims has no falsifier attached to it?
- Is there a claim in your team's plan today that you would score 'confident' when honestly it is 'hopeful'?

SPEAKING

Commit and calibrate — out loud

15 min

Task 1 — Solo (2 min): Prepare, out loud, a 60-second Q3 read on a real number you own — pipeline, headcount, budget, retention. State the direction, the confidence, and the falsifier.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

Task 2 — Solo delivery (8 min): Record yourself delivering the 60 seconds. Play it back. Score yourself on: did the direction land in the first sentence? did the confidence interval land in the second? did the falsifier land before you stopped? Re-record until all three land in order.

Speaking challenge: Deliver the same 60 seconds a third time in the register your team would actually recognise as you — hedges, cadence, downward finals — with no scripted phrases visible on the page. If you can't, you don't yet own the register.

Teacher notes

Coaching: Two failure modes to name back to the student — the hedge that swallows the direction (under-claiming), and the direction that swallows the hedge (over-claiming). Third-take C1 register is when both survive.

Record your answer

WRITING

A memo in the register of decisive uncertainty

25 min homework

Task (240–280 words): Write a memo to your team announcing a decision you actually have to make in the next fortnight. Use the commit-and-hedge scaffold.

Requirements:

- The direction lands in the first two sentences, without hedging.
- The confidence interval is visible in language ('my base case is', 'on balance', 'subject to').
- Include at least five different hedges from the C1 palette.
- End with the two specific signals that could re-open the question in 90 days.

Re-read the next day and underline every sentence that, on reflection, over- or under-claims. Redraft each one.

WRAP-UP

Consolidate before you leave

5 min

Answer each prompt out loud or in a note to yourself.

- Which of your current claims at work has no falsifier attached to it?
- Which failure mode is more yours — over-claiming or under-claiming? What's the evidence?

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- Name three hedges from today you'll use, unprompted, this week.
- One vocal default you'll stop; one you'll start.
- Rate your own last Q-review 1–5 on: direction / calibration / falsifier / cadence. Which is weakest?

Take-away:

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

WORKBOOK · HOME PRACTICE

Unit 3B Workbook

Do this after class. Answers are marked for your teacher.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

VOCABULARY

The register of decisive uncertainty

8 min

- 'Confident humility' most closely describes a leader who:
  (a) never admits doubt
  (b) hedges every claim
  (c) asserts a view while remaining genuinely open to being wrong
  (d) refuses to decide
  Answer key: (c) asserts a view while remaining genuinely open to being wrong
- A 'confident hedge' is a sentence that:
  (a) softens without weakening the decision
  (b) refuses to commit
  (c) exaggerates certainty
  (d) apologises for the call
  Answer key: (a) softens without weakening the decision
- 'On balance' is used to:
  (a) dismiss a counter-view
  (b) weigh both sides before landing
  (c) stall a decision
  (d) escalate a disagreement
  Answer key: (b) weigh both sides before landing
- 'I could be wrong, but…' most naturally precedes:
  (a) a firm decision
  (b) a considered claim
  (c) a data pull
  (d) a legal disclaimer
  Answer key: (b) a considered claim
- Someone who 'talks past' a colleague:
  (a) speaks without engaging their point
  (b) insults them
  (c) interrupts them
  (d) agrees loudly
  Answer key: (a) speaks without engaging their point

GRAMMAR

Hedging language & modal register — the confident hedge

12 min

- ____, the return case still holds — even after the sensitivity.
  (a) On balance
  (b) Whereas
  (c) Insofar as
  (d) Notwithstanding
  Answer key: (a) On balance

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- I ____ be wrong, but the second-order effects look larger than we modelled.
  (a) might
  (b) must
  (c) should
  (d) would
  Answer key: (a) might
- The evidence ____ suggest that the effect is temporary.
  (a) would
  (b) tends to
  (c) might not to
  (d) could to
  Answer key: (b) tends to
- It's ____ that the market has priced this in.
  (a) conceivable
  (b) conceivably that
  (c) conceived
  (d) conceive
  Answer key: (a) conceivable
- My reading — ____ tentative — is that the deal closes above ninety.
  (a) albeit
  (b) although is
  (c) despite being of
  (d) whilst is
  Answer key: (a) albeit
- There ____ well be a case for pausing the rollout for a week.
  (a) could
  (b) might
  (c) may
  (d) all correct
  Answer key: (d) all correct

Now rewrite each sentence using the phrase in bold.

- Add the hedge without weakening: 'I think we should sign.' could be wrong_ could be wrong_ could be wrong_ , but I think we should sign.
- Weigh and land: 'It's still worth doing.' on balance_ on balance_ , it's still worth doing.
- Register a soft claim: 'The market usually rewards this.' The market tends to_ tends to_ reward this.
- Add a concessive hedge: 'The view is speculative but useful.' The view — albeit_ speculative — is useful.
- Use the modal register: 'There is probably a case for pausing.' There might well_ might well_ be a case for pausing.

WRITING

A short considered-position email

20 min

Task (160–200 words): Write the opening two paragraphs of an email to a peer taking a considered position on a decision your team is debating. Paragraph 1: your reading of the situation. Paragraph 2: the recommendation you nevertheless want to make.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- Use at least four hedging devices from the lesson (e.g. on balance, tends to, could be wrong, but, albeit, might well).
- End with a clear recommendation — not a question.
- Do not use the words obviously, clearly or just.

Teacher notes

Marking focus: Does the hedging protect the decision, or dilute it? Is there a real recommendation at the end?