



University of Vermont Graduate Writing Center

The Language of Stance-Taking

Adapted from Michelle Cox, Cornell University, and Swales & Feak,
Academic Writing for Graduate Students

Stance-taking refers to how you indicate your attitude toward an idea. When you fail to indicate any stance, your writing will appear writer-less and your specific contribution will be lost. When you overdo or underdo your stance, you may end up sounding too tentative or too assertive in your claims. Use this handout to guide you toward language to effectively establish your stance.

Hedges soften a statement.

Scientists and commercial food growers disagree about the environmental costs of almond production, the former *suggesting* that production *may* endanger butterfly and bee populations.

Boosters strengthen a statement.

Scientists and commercial food growers disagree about the environmental costs of almond production, the former *demonstrating* that production *will* endanger butterfly and bee populations.

Qualifiers set some limits on an otherwise boosted statement.

In the San Fernando Valley, according to this preliminary study, almond production has *tended* to deplete butterfly and bee populations. *One exception* is found in organic production for local markets.

Attitude markers reveal an author's attitude toward a proposition or idea by indicating surprise, disbelief, understanding, or interest.

It is surprising that / hard to accept that / notable that commercial food growers have rejected the findings of three USDA-funded studies.

Examples of positive evaluative adjectives: *useful, important, interesting, detailed, up-to-date, insightful, significant*

Examples of negative evaluative adjectives: *inconsistent, restricted, misleading, poorly designed, limited*

Examples of "neutral" verbs: describe, show, study, note, point out, indicate, report, observe, take into consideration, examine, state, mention

Examples of "tentative" verbs": suggest, speculate, intimate, hypothesize, imply, propose, recommend, posit, view, question the view that, postulate

Examples of "assertive" verbs: Reveal, demonstrate, argue, claim, emphasize, contend, maintain, assert, deny, negate, refute, reject, challenge, counter, strongly believe, hold