119 Deciding and hedging

English uses a number of words and phrases to discuss the different sides of an argument or to make sentences sound less definite.
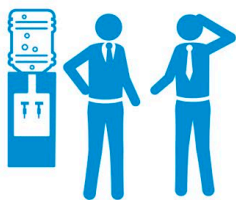
119.1   DISCUSSING ARGUMENTS

There are specific words and phrases which are used to discuss or compare the good and bad sides of an argument.

> I'm not sure whether to go to the party tonight.

> On the one hand, I'd have a great time.
> On the other hand, I have work to do.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Although my friends will be at the party, I don't want to stay up late.

I could go to the party. **Alternatively** I could stay in and study.

Of course, there is going to be good music and lots of food.

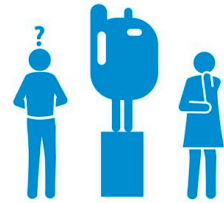I don't want to study Art. **However**, my teacher thinks I'm good at it.

Despite my reservations, I think I'll go to the party anyway.

119.2 HEDGING

Hedging words and phrases can be added to a sentence
to make its meaning less definite, direct, or strong.

Polls $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\textbf{suggest} \\ \textbf{indicate}\end{array}\right\}$ **that locals dislike the new statue.**

Hedging verbs.

It is $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\textbf{arguably} \\ \textbf{potentially}\end{array}\right\}$ **the strangest statue around.**

Hedging adverbs.

$\left.\begin{array}{l}\textbf{To a certain degree,} \\ \textbf{To some extent,}\end{array}\right\}$ **locals feel their views are being ignored.**

Hedging phrases.

119.3 "SEEM" AND "APPEAR"

"Seem" and "appear" are words used to distance oneself from a
statement. This is useful when it is not certain if the statement is true.
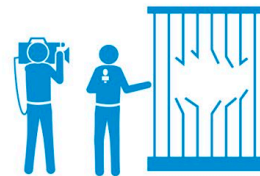
The prisoners $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\textbf{seem} \\ \textbf{appear}\end{array}\right\}$ **to have vanished.**

"Seem" and "appear" are often followed
by another verb in the infinitive.

It $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\textbf{seems} \\ \textbf{appears}\end{array}\right\}$ **that the prison cell was left unguarded.**

"It seems" or "It appears" can be
followed by a "that" clause.

It would $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\textbf{seem} \\ \textbf{appear}\end{array}\right\}$ **that a file was used to break the bars.**

"Would" adds even more
distance or uncertainty.