

**Certainty and uncertainty in Academic English – adverbs and other parts of speech**

*What do these linking expressions have in common?*

1. Apparently,...
2. Clearly,...
3. Controversially,...
4. Evidently,...
5. Hypothetically,...
6. Invariably,...
7. Objectively (speaking),...
8. Obviously,...
9. Potentially,...
10. Presumably...
11. Reportedly,...
12. Supposedly,...
13. Theoretically
14. Undoubtedly

*They can be divided into two types. What are the two categories? Which expressions above go in which category?*

<b>Category 1 =</b> _____	<b>Category 2 =</b> _____

*Use the examples below (most in their more natural positions inside the sentence) to help check your answers to the questions above, also doing the same for the other phrases with the same functions there.*

1. Roman husbands apparently had complete control over household finances.
2. Improvements in income clearly correlate with improved happiness at the lower levels, however...
3. Controversially, Smith claims that her theory is also applicable to...
4. The new species is evidently related to the butterflies on distant Easter Island.
5. Sufficiently large numbers of participants hypothetically make for rational markets. However,...
6. A little management supervision invariably produces better performance, but increasing this...
7. Looking at the data objectively rather than examining people's reactions to the situation reveals that...
8. Wallpaper obviously has little direct influence on the noise levels, so the effect must be due to...
9. The risk could potentially overwhelm...
10. The stories were presumably passed down orally through the priest caste.
11. Freud reportedly often diverged from his ideas in his own relationships.
12. Personal involvement in the community supposedly prevents objective reporting, but...
13. Education theoretically improves the performance of the economy, though there are obvious exceptions to this rule.
14. This undoubtedly has a subconscious effect.

*Label the underlined adverbs below with S for sure or U for unsure in the same way.*

15. Smith allegedly manipulated his results.
  16. The policy will assuredly have a positive effect on the situation.\_
  17. Subsidies certainly change business behaviour, the question is...
  18. Patients conceivably benefit from the placebo affect nevertheless.
  19. Scientists conclusively disproved that idea as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century when...
  20. Gonzalez convincingly argues that there is no cause and effect relationship between...
  21. It is definitely the case that sociological research changes the thing that is being studied.
  22. Schwartz definitively showed that...
  23. Gravity demonstrably falls outside what Newtonian theories would suggest when...
  24. Policies which aim for high inflation are inherently unjust.
  25. It is likely that this will continue or even accelerate in the medium term.
  26. This discrepancy possibly invalidates the whole report.
  27. The two sets of figures correlate precisely.
  28. The majority of governments will probably experience the same effect.
  29. It has been reliably reported that...
  30. The results of the new survey seemingly show the former to have been badly designed.
  31. This undeniably has an impact on society, but what impact has yet to be determined.
  32. Government spending universally correlates with decreased entrepreneurial spirit, though this does not mean the same thing as less actual enterprise.
- Underline other words in the example sentences that help people express certainty and uncertainty.*

*Make expressions with other forms of the underlined words above, e.g. "It appears that..." from "apparently".*

*Make the new strong phrases softer and the new soft phrases ones stronger, by adding words such as the ones you underlined before.*

### Partial suggested answers without stronger and weaker versions

1. Roman husbands apparently had complete control over household finances. – **It is apparent that...**
2. Improvements in income clearly correlate with improved happiness at the lower levels, however... – **It is clear that...**
3. Controversially, Smith claims that her theory is also applicable to... – **Smith's controversial theory**
4. The new species is evidently related to the butterflies on distant Easter Island. – **It is evident that.../ The evidence shows that...**
5. Sufficiently large numbers of participants hypothetically make for rational markets. However,... – **You can make a hypothetical case for...**
6. A little management supervision invariably produces better performance, but increasing this... – **An invariable effect of...**
7. Looking at the data objectively rather than examining people's reactions to the situation reveals that... – **An objective look at the data shows...**
8. Wallpaper obviously has little direct influence on the noise levels, so the effect must be due to... – **It is obvious that...**
9. The risk could potentially overwhelm... – **There is a potential risk of...**
10. The stories were presumably passed down orally through the priest caste. – **We can presume that.../ We can make the presumption that...**
11. Freud reportedly often diverged from his ideas in his own relationships. – **According to reports,...**
12. Personal involvement in the community supposedly prevents objective reporting, but... – **It can be supposed that...**
13. Education theoretically improves the performance of the economy, though there are obvious exceptions to this rule. – **According to the theory,...**
14. This undoubtedly has a subconscious effect. – **There is no doubt that...**
15. Smith allegedly manipulated his results. – **It has been alleged that...**
16. The policy will assuredly have a positive effect on the situation. – **The government assured voters that...**

17. Subsidies certainly change business behaviour, the question is... – **It is certain that...**
18. Patients conceivably benefit from the placebo effect nevertheless. – **We can conceive that.../ It is possible to conceive that.../ It is conceivable that...**
19. Scientists conclusively disproved that idea as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century when... – **A conclusive proof of that theory is...**
20. Gonzalez convincingly argues that there is no cause and effect relationship between... – **Gonzalez's convincing argument is that...**
21. It is definitely the case that sociological research changes the thing that is being studied. – **There is a definite effect of...**
22. Schwartz definitively showed that... – **The definitive piece of research on this matter is...**
23. Gravity demonstrably falls outside what Newtonian theories would suggest when... – **There is a demonstrable effect when.../ It has been demonstrated that...**
24. Policies which aim for high inflation are inherently unjust. – **Injustice is inherent to...**
25. It is likely that this will continue or even accelerate in the medium term. – **In all likelihood,...**
26. This discrepancy possibly invalidates the whole report. – **It is possible that.../ There is a possibility that...**
27. The two sets of figures correlate precisely. – **There is a precise correlation between...**
28. The majority of governments will probably experience the same effect. – **It is probable that...**
29. It has been reliably reported that... – **Reliable reports suggest...**
30. The results of the new survey seemingly show the former to have been badly designed. – **It seems that.../ There is a seeming discrepancy between...**
31. This undeniably has an impact on the whole of society, but what impact has yet to be determined. – **It cannot be denied that...**
32. Government spending universally correlates with decreased entrepreneurial spirit, though this does not mean the same thing as less actual enterprise. – **It is a universal pattern that...**

*Use the key words below to help with the last task. They are in the same grammatical form as the answer key that you will see later, but you can change them if you like. More than one might be possible with each sentence above.*

- all
- almost
- appears to
- As is predicted
- attempted
- clear
- convincingly
- difficult
- fairly
- formerly
- high
- highly
- It is more than
- It seems
- little
- may
- more
- not necessarily
- not really
- obvious
- presume that...
- reasonably
- seemingly
- strong
- There is a more than
- There is no reason not to...
- There seems to be
- un-
- What is (often) said to be
- would suggest

*What's the difference between "certainly" and "surely"? Which is stronger? Which is more academic?*

*Look at the answer key and underline other useful words and phrases for expressing certainty and uncertainty.*

### Full suggested answers with stronger and weaker version

1. Roman husbands apparently had complete control over household finances. – It is apparent that... – (“**apparent**” is already stronger than “**apparently**”)
2. Improvements in income clearly correlate with improved happiness at the lower levels, however... – It is clear that... – **It is fairly clear that...**
3. Controversially, Smith claims that her theory is also applicable to... – Smith’s controversial theory... – **Smith’s formerly controversial theory.../ Smith’s (now) uncontroversial theory...**
4. The new species is evidently related to the butterflies on distant Easter Island. – It is evident that.../ The evidence shows that... – **The evidence would suggest that...**
5. Sufficiently large numbers of participants hypothetically make for rational markets. However,... – You can make a hypothetical case for... – **There is a more than hypothetical case for...**
6. A little management supervision invariably produces better performance, but increasing this... – An invariable effect of... – **An effect which shows little variation is...**
7. Looking at the data objectively rather than examining people’s reactions to the situation reveals that... – An objective look at the data shows... – **A more objective look at the data appears to show...**
8. Wallpaper obviously has little direct influence on the noise levels, so the effect must be due to... – It is obvious that... – **It less than obvious that...**
9. The risk could potentially overwhelm... – There is a potential risk of... – **There is an obvious potential risk of...**
10. The stories were presumably passed down orally through the priest caste. – We can presume that.../ We can make the presumption that... – **It is not really a presumption to say that.../ There is no reason not to presume that...**
11. Freud reportedly often diverged from his ideas in his own relationships. – According to reports,... – **According to all reports,...**
12. Personal involvement in the community supposedly prevents objective reporting, but... – It can be supposed that... – **We were right in supposing that...**
13. Education theoretically improves the performance of the economy, though there are obvious exceptions to this rule. – According to the theory,... – **As is predicted by the theory,...**
14. This undoubtedly has a subconscious effect. – There is no doubt that... – **There is little doubt that...**
15. Smith allegedly manipulated his results.– It has been alleged that... – **It has been convincingly alleged that...**
16. The policy will assuredly have a positive effect on the situation. – The government assured voters that... – **The government attempted to assure voters that...**
17. Subsidies certainly change business behaviour, the question is... – It is certain that... – **It is fairly/ reasonably/ almost certain that...**
18. Patients conceivably benefit from the placebo affect nevertheless. – We can conceive that.../ It is possible to conceive that.../ It is conceivable that... – **It is easy to conceive that.../ It is more than conceivable that...**
19. Scientists conclusively disproved that idea as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century when... – A conclusive proof of that theory is... – **A seemingly conclusive proof...**

20. Gonzalez convincingly argues that there is no cause and effect relationship between...  
– Gonzalez’s convincing argument is that... – **Gonzalez’s reasonably convincing argument is that...**
21. It is definitely the case that sociological research changes the thing that is being studied. – There is a definite effect of... – **There seems to be a definite effect of...**
22. Schwartz definitively showed that... – The definitive piece of research on this matter is... – **What is (often) said to be the definitive piece of research on this matter...**
23. Gravity demonstrably falls outside what Newtonian theories would suggest when... – There is a demonstrable effect when.../ It has been demonstrated that... – **There seems to be a demonstrable link between...**
24. Policies which aim for high inflation are inherently unjust. – Injustice is inherent to... – **Although not necessarily inherent to this kind of situation,...**
25. It is likely that this will continue or even accelerate in the medium term. – In all likelihood,... - (“**In all likelihood**” is already stronger than “**It is likely**”)
26. This discrepancy possibly invalidates the whole report. – It is possible that.../ There is a possibility that... – **There is a strong possibility that...**
27. The two sets of figures correlate precisely. – There is a precise correlation between... – **There is a reasonably precise correlation between...**
28. The majority of governments will probably experience the same effect. – It is probable that... – **It is highly probable that.../ There is a high probability that...**
29. It has been reliably reported that... – Reliable reports suggest... – **Seemingly reliable reports suggest...**
30. The results of the new survey seemingly show the former to have been badly designed. – It seems that.../ There is a seeming discrepancy between... – **It seems clear that...**
31. This undeniably has an impact on the whole of society, but what impact has yet to be determined. – It cannot be denied that... – **It is difficult to deny that...**
32. Government spending universally correlates with decreased entrepreneurial spirit, though this does not mean the same thing as less actual enterprise. – It is a universal pattern that... – **It is an almost universal pattern that.../ ... may turn out to be a universal pattern.**