# Subjectivity vs Objectivity

**Objective** claims relate to measurable facts, but they are not necessarily factual! Objective claims can be proved false. The point is that there is some way to *measure* or *determine* whether they are true or not. If two people disagree about an objective claim, one of them is wrong.

*“The moon is made of cheese” is an objective claim. There is a way to prove that it is false.*

**Subjective** claims are based on personal opinion. There is no way to prove whether they are true or false. If two people disagree about a subjective claim, neither of them is right nor wrong. People have different tastes, and these don’t need to be ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’.

*“That dog is cute” is a subjective claim. There is no objective, measurable level of what people consider to be cute. Even if you can prove that 99.9% of people find the dog ugly, that doesn’t prove that I find it ugly.*

Although it might seem like objective claims should be mainly used in persuasive writing, in fact both subjective and objective claims can be persuasive. Use a mixture of both.

*Oranges* ***are*** *high in vitamin C (objective), and* ***I think*** *they’re delicious (subjective)!*

# Modality

Modal words are words which express different levels of certainty.

* High modality words sound SURE – *must, will, definitely, absolutely.*
* Medium modality words sound FAIRLY sure – *can, should, probably, likely.*
* Low modality words sound UNSURE – *might, possibly, may, sometimes.*

High modality words or phrases are often used in persuasive writing because they sound authoritative. They *imply* that the writer has proof, experience, or a reason to be so sure. “Participating in competitive sports is unquestionably beneficial!” sounds more convincing than “Participating in competitive sports might be beneficial” or “is probably beneficial”

However, extreme statements or broad generalisations are easy to disprove, especially if they are subjective. High modality can be LESS convincing if you exaggerate and don’t back it up with proof.

# Connotations

As well as their literal meaning or ‘denotation’, many words have ‘connotations’. Connotations are linked ideas or feelings that come to mind when most people hear a word. These can be positive or negative. Some words may have the same literal meaning but very different connotations. If you describe something ‘bizarre’ or ‘weird’, you might be implying that it’s bad, whereas if you describe it as ‘extraordinary’ or ‘remarkable’, you’re probably implying it’s good. Connotations can be subjective as they are sometimes linked to people’s personal experiences or memories, but in most cases, certain words are commonly understood to have good or bad connotations.

Connotations are useful in persuasive writing because they create a subtle emotional response in the reader, sometimes even without them even realising it. Writers will purposely choose words with a connotation that supports their argument. If you wanted to persuade the reader/listener that culling foxes was a bad thing, you might say that the foxes were being ‘slaughtered’ rather than ‘culled’. ‘Slaughter’ has violent and negative connotations, whereas ‘cull’ has neutral or even positive connotations as it implies that there is a positive outcome for the environment.