Formal and Informal Language
Levels of Formality

- Informal
- Semi-Formal
- Formal
Formal and Informal Language

Why...

- **Formal English**, to be able to read a book, give a business presentation or write an official letter.

- **Informal English** to understand and communicate with English speakers in everyday situations.
Formal English is used in “serious” texts and situations — for example, in official documents, books, news reports, articles, business letters or official

As the price of five dollars was reasonable, I decided to make the purchase without further thought.
Informal English is used in everyday conversations and in personal letters.

It was, like, five bucks, so I was like “okay”.
Formal vs Informal Language

- **Formal language** is *less personal*
  - It is used in writing for **professional or academic purposes**.
  - Formal language does not use colloquialisms, contractions or first person pronouns such as ‘I’ or ‘We’.

- **Informal language** is *more casual and spontaneous*.
  - It is used when communicating **with friends or family** either in writing or in conversation.
  - It is used when writing personal emails, text messages and in some business correspondence.
  - The tone of informal language is more personal than formal language.
## Formal and Informal Language: Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal English</th>
<th>Informal English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used in official, literary, academic, etc. content.</td>
<td>Used in everyday, personal conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically used in careful, edited writing</td>
<td>Typically used in “improvised” speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Formal and Informal Language: Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal English</th>
<th>Informal English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentences are <strong>longer</strong> and more <strong>complicated</strong>.</td>
<td>Sentences are <strong>simpler</strong> and <strong>shorter</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex: <em>Toyota’s US sales bounced back in March as substantial discounts helped to win back customers who had been shaken by the firm’s mass safety recalls.</em></td>
<td>Ex.: <em>Did you see Toyota’s sales figures? Looks like the discounts have actually worked.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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# Formal and Informal Language: Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal English</th>
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<tr>
<td>A huge number of words and phrases are used mainly in formal English. For</td>
<td>A huge number of words and phrases are used mainly in informal English. For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>example: *nevertheless, to disclose, to constitute, to undertake, daunting,</td>
<td>example: *dude, freaking, uh-huh, nope (= no), to puke, trashy, grownup, awe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impervious, anew, truly, solace, to enchant, frantically, sizeable, to clutch,</td>
<td>some, to chill out, stuff, hard-up, to tick somebody off, to sell like crazy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heyday, as it happens, upsurge, retrieval*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Formal and Informal Language: Differences

Contractions

Informal: The improvements can’t be introduced due to funding restrictions.
Formal: Improvements cannot be introduced due to funding restrictions.

Informal: I don’t believe that the results are accurate.
Formal: The results are not believed to be accurate.

Informal: The research project won’t continue next year.
Formal: The research project will not continue next year.
Formal and Informal Language: Differences

Slang/Colloquialisms

Informal: The mob was very rowdy during the protest against cuts to university funding.
Formal: The crowd was very rowdy during the protest against the cuts to university funding.

Informal: Lecturers still count on students to use correct grammar and punctuation in essays.
Formal: Lecturers expect students to use correct grammar and punctuation in essays.

Informal: It was raining cats and dogs.
Formal: It was raining very heavily.
First Person Pronouns

**Informal:** I considered various research methods for the study.

**Formal:** Various research methods were considered for the study.

**Informal:** We believe the practice is unsustainable.

**Formal:** It is believed the practice is unsustainable.

**Informal:** During the interview I asked students about their experiences.

**Formal:** During the interview students were asked about their experiences.
## Formal and Informal Language: Differences in Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Formal English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>say sorry</td>
<td>apologize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go up</td>
<td>Increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go down</td>
<td>decrease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set up</td>
<td>Establish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring about</td>
<td>cause</td>
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Formal and Informal Language: Differences in Vocabulary

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<tr>
<td>ring up</td>
<td>call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show up</td>
<td>arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let</td>
<td>permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>Therefore/Thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think</td>
<td>In my opinion,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to get Formal and Informal Inputs

**Formal Language:**
- official, literary, academic, etc.
- edited
- complex sentences

**Informal Language:**
- conversational
- improvised
- simple sentences

**Written Content:**
- personal e-mails
- forum posts
- blogs
- news articles
- books

**Spoken Content:**
- movies
- TV series
- videogames
- audiobooks
- spoken news
- podcast/radio conversations
- talk shows
- everyday conversations
# Formal and Informal Language: Some Expression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shall</td>
<td>Should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td>Could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May, might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please, kindly</td>
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## Formal and Informal Language: Some Expression

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<tr>
<td>Will you get a glass of water</td>
<td>Would you get me a glass of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you shall find a problem</td>
<td>Should you find a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you close the door</td>
<td>Could you please close the door</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**May, might**

**Please, kindly**
Levels of Formality

- **Informal:**
  
  *Can you fetch me water*

- **Semi-Formal:**
  
  *Can you please fetch me water*

- **Formal**
  
  *Could you please fetch me water*
Levels of Formality

- **Informal:**
  Will you fetch water for me

- **Semi-Formal:**
  Would you please fetch water for me

- **Formal**
  Would you mind fetching water for me
Benefits of Formality

- Better Control of Human Resources
- Better Public Relations
- Edge over others
- Professional Growth
Great Leaders are those who use their Words Effectively