

Name:

Class:

Formal and Informal Language

What comes to mind when you hear the word *style*?

In the English language, style refers to a writer's individual choices in syntax, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure.

One major component of style is the choice between informal and formal writing.

What comes to mind when you hear the words *informal* and *formal*?

Formal or informal is the level you "dress up" your writing. Informal language is casual and most commonly used in everyday conversation. Formal language is traditional, academic, and proper.

Remember: formal writing is not always right and informal is not always wrong, but a writer should adjust his or her words based on what is appropriate for a particular setting and audience.

For example, while it might be OK to refer to your friend as "bro," that would be inappropriate to say to a teacher or your boss.

Again, while it might be OK to say to your coach that your "momma dukes" is giving you a ride home after practice *in an informal conversation*... you would refer to your mom as your "mother" if you were filling out a scholarship application to that very same coach.

In the box below, sort the following situations in the column you think they best belong.

Text message to your friend
Resume to college
Job application
Personal journal

Social studies homework
E-mail to your teacher
Recipe for your friend
Text message to your boss

Essay for standardized test
A joke to your classmate
E-mail to a stranger
Lyrics to a song

Informal	Formal

The level of formality you write with influences the expectations of your audience. The more sophisticated your writing sounds, the more seriously your audience will take you, and the more respect you show. If you e-mail your teacher saying "yo miss b whats the homework?" ... don't be surprised if you don't hear back from Miss B.

Rules of Formal Writing

No Slang	Avoid slang words/phrases and idiomatic expressions such as “spill the tea,” “sus,” “finsta,” “slay,” “woke,” “beating a dead horse,” “speak of the devil,” and “frenemy.”
No Abbreviations, Acronyms, or Symbols	Spell out words in full. Avoid “texting” language. For example, “B4” (before), “YOLO” (you only live once), “ASAP” (as soon as possible), “T.V.” (television), “B/C” (because), and “&” (and).
No Contractions	Contractions are not the biggest culprit out there, but your writing does sound more formal if you avoid them. Write “I am” instead of “I’m.” Write out “should not” instead of “shouldn’t.”
No Jargon	Jargon is technical language used by a certain group of people, such as members of a sport, hobby, career field, etc. Gamers have certain lingo they use, just like baseball players and members of the military. Unless your audience is a part of that specific group or trade, you want to avoid using terms they would not understand. Overloading your audience with words they do not know will not help you achieve your purpose. Examples: Military jargon = chow hall (cafeteria), the head (the bathroom) Baseball jargon = high cheese (high fastball), double header (back to back games) Gamer jargon = AFK (away from keyboard), smurfing Police jargon = b&e (breaking and entering), 10-4 (affirmative)
Spell out Numbers Less than 100	Write out five instead of 5. Write sixty-four instead of 64. *This excludes dates and page numbers. You would still write out the date as November 10, 2020 or “found on page 54.”
Use Precise Language	Never use words like “stuff,” “things,” “awesome,” or “bad.” Make sure your writing is as clear as possible.

Practice

Part 1 Directions: Identify if the following sentences are informal or formal by writing an "I" or "F" on the line. If the sentence is informal, underline what makes the style informal.

- _____ 1. You and bae are goals.
- _____ 2. I enjoy visiting Myrtle Beach in the summer.
- _____ 3. Can I get some extra credit?
- _____ 4. I cant get a 0 on this assignment.
- _____ 5. Dogs are loyal animals.
- _____ 6. Sheena applied to Old Navy.
- _____ 7. To bake well, you must use exact measurements.
- _____ 8. School uniforms are dumb.
- _____ 9. Colleges are particular about who they accept to their institutions.
- _____ 10. I ship Jim and Pam.
- _____ 11. I apologize, I am running late for work today.
- _____ 12. Julie will literally take a selfie everyday before school.
- _____ 13. I stan for Kobe Bryant, always.
- _____ 14. New York Fashion Week usually occurs in September.
- _____ 15. It's pumpkin spice szn.
- _____ 16. The first Star Wars film was released in 1977.
- _____ 17. My flight to Denver was cancelled due to a snow storm.
- _____ 18. Liam watches football clips on his phone 24/7.
- _____ 19. I would be the perfect candidate for class president.
- _____ 20. My mom keeps the AC blasting in August.
- _____ 21. John F. Kennedy was assassinated November 22, 1963.
- _____ 22. I love when celebrities throw shade at each other.
- _____ 23. Dying your eyebrows black when you have blonde hair is a lewk.
- _____ 24. Voting is a right that every eligible citizen should take advantage of.

Part 2 Directions: Rewrite each of the following sentences to make them formal.

Example: Thats gonna be a big problem.

Corrected: That is going to be a serious problem.

1. It is way toooo hot out rn.

2. He couldve told me about it earlier.

3. She don't even know what she got herself into.

4. I'm gonna have a great time this weekend at the shindig.

5. Babe Ruth is the GOAT, ask anyone.

6. Me and the boys will be at the game later.

7. Christina is triggered because her boyfriend read her DMs.

8. I literally hit snooze 5 times before I can wake up.

9. Get on my level.

10. My sis is hosting a BBQ tonite.

Answer Key

Formal and Informal Writing

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Informal	Formal
Text message to your friend Personal journal Recipe for your friend A joke to your classmate Lyrics to a song	Resume to college Job application Social studies homework E-mail to your teacher Text message to your boss Essay for standardized test E-mail to a stranger (better safe than sorry—first impressions count!)

Part 1 Answer Key

- ☐ I 1. You and bae are goals.
- ☐ F 2. I enjoy visiting Myrtle Beach in the summer.
- ☐ I 3. Can I get some extra credit?
- ☐ I 4. I cant get a 0 on this assignment.
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- ☐ I 22. I love when celebrities throw shade at each other.
- ☐ I 23. Dying your eyebrows black when you have blonde hair is a lewk.
- ☐ F 24. Voting is a right that every eligible citizen should take advantage of.

Part 2 Answer Key — Answers will vary.

1. It is way toooo hot out rn.

It is extremely hot outside today.

2. He couldve told me about it earlier.

He could have told me the news earlier.

3. She don't even know what she got herself into.

She is not even aware of the situation she became involved in.

4. I'm gonna have a great time this weekend at the shindig.

I am going to have a great time this weekend at the party.

5. Babe Ruth is the GOAT, ask anyone.

Most people would agree, Babe Ruth is the greatest baseball player of all time.

6. Me and the boys will be at the game later.

My friends and I will attend the game later.

7. Christina is triggered because her boyfriend read her DMs.

Christina is very irritated because her boyfriend read her private direct messages.

8. I literally hit snooze 5 times before I can wake up.

I press the snooze button five times before I wake up in the morning.

9. Get on my level.

Try to compete as well as me.

10. My sis is hosting a BBQ tonite.

My sister is hosting a barbecue tonight.