

Formal and Informal Language



Formal and Informal Pairs



- 1) How do you do?
- 2) It's a pleasure to meet you. Goodbye.
- 3) I'm afraid your child is experiencing difficulty.
- 4) One grows weary in these matters.
- 5) I agree with my colleague that.
- 6) Please state your business.

- A) What'cha want?
- B) Nice to meet you. See ya!
- C) Lily's right...
- D) Your kid is causing trouble.
- E) I'm tired of this junk.
- F) What's up?



whatcha doin?!

Formal vs Informal Language

- **Single word adverbs**
 - Arise, board
- **Formal connecting words**
 - In addition, furthermore, however
- **Impersonal**
 - It is claimed that...
- **Abstract nouns**
 - Is happiness possible during unemployment?
- **No contractions**
 - I will, we cannot

- **Phrasal verbs**
 - To get up, to get on
- **Informal connecting words**
 - And, but, so
- **Personal**
 - People claim that...
- **Modal verbs, adjectives**
 - Can people be happy when they haven't got a job?
- **Contractions**
 - I'll, we can't

Academic Written Language



- Standard usage and grammar
- Standard vocabulary
- Distance between the writer and reader
 - Third person
 - Passive voice
- Authoritative and neutral
 - Not aggressive, timid, or too enthusiastic

Distance



- Passive voice – the focus is the result of an action, not the subject doing the action
 - “Scientists observed strange behavior in hedgehogs after feeding them fish and chips.”
 - “Strange behavior was observed in hedgehogs after they were fed fish and chips.”
- Third person (not “I” or “you”)
 - “One often feels the pressure of modern lifestyle.”

Tone



- The following should be avoided:
- 1) Aggressive tone
 - “This is the correct way of spreading butter on bread.”
- 2) Timid tone
 - “This might be a decent way of spreading butter on bread.”
- 3) Enthusiastic tone
 - “This way of spreading butter on bread is amazing and should be learnt by everyone!”

Style



- **Polonius:**

My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
What day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time;
Therefore, **since brevity is the soul of wit,**
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad. . . .

(Hamlet Act 2, scene 2, 86–92)

- **AKA get to the point!**

Academic Writing Guidelines



- Avoid common but vague words (nice, big, ...)
- Focus on structure and paragraphs
- Avoid too much personal and emotive language
- Hedging = avoiding commitment
- Avoid generalizations