

FORMAL AND INFORMAL LANGUAGE

Level 1 Reading: understand how writers choose formal or informal language for different audiences and purposes.

1. What is formal language?

Definition and examples	
Formal language is careful, polite and professional. It is often used in official messages, workplaces, applications and when writing to people you do not know well. Examples Dear Sir or Madam I am writing to enquire about the course. Could you please send further information?	Formal language often includes: • complete sentences • polite phrases • standard grammar and spelling • fewer slang words or contractions Useful endings Yours sincerely Yours faithfully

2. What is informal language?

Definition and examples	
Informal language is relaxed, personal and friendly. It is often used with friends, family or people you know well. Examples Hi Sam, Just checking if you're free later. Let me know!	Informal language often includes: • contractions such as I'm, don't, can't • friendly wording and everyday vocabulary • short messages and personal comments • sometimes emojis or exclamation marks

3. When do we use each type?

Situation	Best style	Reason
Email to a college	Formal	You need a polite, professional tone.
Text to a close friend	Informal	The relationship is personal and relaxed.
Notice from a landlord or employer	Formal	The message is official and clear.

Quick message to a sibling	Informal	You know the reader well.
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4. Quick comparison

Formal	Informal
Dear Customer	Hi there
I would be grateful for a reply.	Get back to me soon.
Thank you for your assistance.	Thanks for your help.
Children	Kids

5. Level 1 exam strategy

Step 1: Read the whole text and think about audience and purpose.

Step 2: Look for clues such as greetings, polite phrases, contractions, slang or emojis.

Step 3: Decide whether the tone is formal or informal.

Step 4: Quote one word or phrase that proves your answer.

6. Example text analysis

Example	
Text A Dear Admissions Team, I am writing to request information about your evening English course. Could you please tell me the start date and the course fee? Why is it formal? • polite greeting • careful wording • complete sentences	Text B Hi Maya, Do you know when the evening class starts? I want to join. Let me know! Why is it informal? • friendly greeting • personal tone • everyday wording

7. Common mistakes

- Do not decide from one word only. Look at the whole text.
- A short text can still be formal.
- A polite text is not always complicated – it is about tone and audience.
- In the exam, avoid answers such as “It sounds formal.” Give evidence.

8. Quick reminder

Formal language = careful, polite and professional.

Informal language = relaxed, personal and friendly.

Always ask: **Who is the audience? What is the purpose?**