

## Formal and Informal Language

In order to write clearly and accurately you need to identify the difference between formal and informal English. Here is a list of some of the most characteristic features that differentiate formal and informal English.

| Formal                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Informal                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Words of Latin/French origin</b><br/><i>residence</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Words of Anglo-Saxon origin</b><br/><i>home</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Single-word verbs</b><br/><i>to arise</i><br/><i>to mount / to board</i></li> </ul>                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Phrasal verbs, idioms with <i>get</i></b><br/><i>to get up</i><br/><i>to get on</i></li> </ul>                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Formal Connecting words</b><br/><i>In addition, furthermore</i><br/><i>However, on the other hand,</i><br/><i>Therefore, consequently</i></li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Informal connecting words</b><br/><i>And</i><br/><i>But</i><br/><i>So</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Impersonal constructions</b><br/><i>it is said that</i><br/><i>the price has been increased</i><br/><i>one never knows</i><br/><i>it can be argued</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Active constructions</b><br/><i>They say that</i><br/><i>they've put the price up</i><br/><i>you never know</i><br/><i>you can argue</i></li> </ul>                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Abstract nouns</b><br/><i>Is happiness possible during unemployment?</i><br/><i>After clarification of the problem areas..</i></li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Modal verbs, adjectives, clauses etc</b><br/><i>Can people be happy when they haven't got a job?</i><br/><i>When the bits everyone was getting wrong had been explained...</i></li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Not ending with prepositions; use of <i>whom</i></b><br/><i>To whom were you speaking?</i></li> </ul>                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ending with prepositions</b><br/><i>Who were you speaking to?</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Complex sentences</b><br/><i>The student, who was late for class, sprinted across the ground.</i></li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Simple sentences</b><br/><i>The student was late for class. He sprinted across the ground.</i></li> </ul>                                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Use of inversions for conditionals and emphasis</b><br/><i>Should you require further information, please contact ...</i></li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Inversion sometimes used for emphasis</b><br/><i>Only then did I realise ...</i></li> </ul>                                                                                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No contractions in writing</b><br/><i>I will, we would</i></li> </ul>                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Contractions in writing</b><br/><i>I'll, we'd</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                              |

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