

Formal and Informal Verbs

Compare formal and informal language.

1. Discuss

Do the following typically use formal, semi-informal, or informal English? Mark each F, S, or I. More than one may apply.

- | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. ____ Textbooks | 4. ____ Speaking with someone in authority | 7. ____ Interacting with friends |
| 2. ____ Government documents | 5. ____ An online hiking blog | 8. ____ Chatting online |
| 3. ____ Speaking with your English teacher | 6. ____ Contracts | 9. ____ A cover letter or resume |

2. Vocabulary

Student A, match the informal verbs and phrases on the left to the formal verbs a-h.

- | Informal | Formal |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. ____ go up | a. discover |
| 2. ____ go down | b. omit |
| 3. ____ look at, check out | c. increase |
| 4. ____ find out | d. examine |
| 5. ____ put off | e. decrease |
| 6. ____ make | f. contact |
| 7. ____ get in touch | g. fabricate |
| 8. ____ leave out | h. postpone, delay |



Student B, match the informal verbs and phrases on the left to the verbs and phrases a-h.

- | Informal | Formal |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. ____ find out | a. appears |
| 2. ____ need to | b. permit |
| 3. ____ think about | c. in the interim |
| 4. ____ seems | d. discover |
| 5. ____ start | e. authorize, authorise (BrE) |
| 6. ____ let | f. be required to |
| 7. ____ give the go ahead | g. commence |
| 8. ____ for now | h. consider |



3. Reading

A. Is the following email written using formal or informal language?

Hi David,

I'm getting in touch with you today to let you know about an event taking place in your area. We will have a sales conference and product launch on the 15th of next month. I want you to think about coming to the conference with your sales team to introduce your new product line.

Please get in touch soon to talk about this opportunity.

Thanks.

Barbara Crumb

B. Underline the informal language in the email above. How many examples did you find?

C. Compare the following email to the email above. Can you identify the changes?

Dear Mr Atwood,

I'm contacting you today to notify you of an event taking place in your area. We will be holding a sales conference and product launch on the 15th of next month. I would like you to consider attending the conference with your sales team to introduce your new product line.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to discuss this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Barbara Crumb

D. Read the following email response.

Dear Barbara,

I am ^{1.} getting in touch with you to say thank you for your email about the sales conference next month.

Unfortunately, we ^{2.} need to ^{3.} put off our upcoming product launch. There ^{4.} seems to be a problem at our manufacturing plant. Production will ^{5.} start again once we ^{6.} find out what the problem is.

^{7.} For now, please ^{8.} check out our catalogue and consider which products you might like us to present at the conference.

I will contact you again as soon as our factory manager authorizes production to recommence.

Sincerely,

David Atwood

E. Substitute the expressions 1-8 in the email response above with suitable formal language.

- | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. | 3. | 5. | 7. |
| 2. | 4. | 6. | 8. |

Formal and Informal Verbs



Level: Intermediate: B1

Updated: Sep 30, 2023

Target: Language function: Comprehending text or speech.
Language forms: Idioms and phrasal verbs. Verb forms.

Teaching time: 60 minutes.

Overview: Using English that is either too formal or too informal for a particular situation can give a bad impression. Students compare informal verbs used in everyday English to their formal equivalents. Students also practice rewriting an email written using informal English.

1. DISCUSS

A warm up activity helps set the mood for the topic/lesson and is a good opportunity to assess students' ability to generate language as well as elicit target vocabulary used in the lesson. If students struggle to engage with their partners, ask questions to encourage participation. Allow a few minutes for students to complete the warm up activity and continue the conversation if interesting.

Individually or with a partner, students should read situations a-j and mark each sentence (F) for formal, (S) for semi-formal, or (I) for informal. Two may apply.

1. S F Textbooks
2. F Government documents
3. S I Speaking with your English teacher
4. F Speaking with someone in authority
5. I An online hiking blog
6. F Contracts
7. I Interacting with friends
8. I Chatting online
9. S F A cover letter or resume

2. VOCABULARY

Students decide who is Student A and B then match the informal verbs on the left to the formal equivalents on the right. Answer any questions that arise and discuss new vocabulary. Students can teach their partner their matches or compare matches and discuss any differences. Check answers as a class.

Student A

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. go up | c. increase |
| 2. go down | e. decrease |
| 3. look at | d. examine |
| 4. find out | f. discover |
| 5. put off | h. postpone, delay |
| 6. make up | g. fabricate |
| 7. get in touch | f. contact |
| 8. leave out | b. omit |

Student B

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. find out | d. discover |
| 2. need to | f. be required to |
| 3. think about | h. consider |
| 4. seems | a. appears |

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 5. start | g. commence |
| 6. let | b. permit |
| 7. give the go ahead | e. authorize, authorise (BrE) |
| 8. for now | c. in the interim |

3. READING

A. Students read the email from Barbara to David. Students should be able to identify that the email is written using informal language.

B. Individually or in pairs, students scan the email in Part 3A and underline any examples of informal language. Students can compare with a partner and discuss or check findings with the class.

1. Hi David
2. getting in touch
3. let you know
4. have a sales conference
5. want you
6. think about coming
7. get in touch
8. talk about
9. Thanks

C. Students compare the formal language used to the informal language used in the email in Part 3A. Answer any questions that arise and discuss the formal language used.

D. Students read the email response from David to Barbara.

E. Individually, students rewrite the 8 informal verbs and phrases with suitable formal language. Students can compare their answers with a partner and discuss any differences or check answers with the class.

1. contacting
2. are required to
3. postpone
4. appears to
5. commence, recommence
6. discover, ascertain
7. In the interim
8. examine