



Informal vs. Formal Writing

Use informal or formal writing depending on the **purpose** and **audience** of the task.

Formal language is less personal than informal and should ideally take an objective, non-combative tone. Types of writing that use formal language are academic papers and graduate school assignments. It does not use contractions and mostly uses third-person pronouns.

Informal language is put into use when talking to friends or family due to its casual and spontaneous nature. Text messages, personal emails, and some business correspondence typically use informal language. It takes less time and can sometimes be more succinct in getting a point across since there are no restrictions.

Writing Concepts

	Examples of Informality	Potential Solutions
Academic writing avoids addressing the reader using second-person pronouns.	You should consider the alternative.	Consider the alternative.
Contractions make writing less formal. Write out the words in their full form instead.	The article doesn't ...	The article does not ...
Scholarly writing will typically not include questions (unless it is the research question).	Why were the plants not growing?	The plants were not growing because...
Avoid exclamations.	The data supports this idea!	The data supports this idea.
Avoid 2-or more word verbs (phrasal verbs) and use 1-word verbs instead.	The article talks about ... The prices go up ...	The article discusses ... The price increases ...
Avoid solely using <i>this/these</i> . Use <i>this/these</i> plus a summary word instead.	Professors should actively involve students in lectures. This will help students retain more information.	Professors should actively involve students in lectures. This engagement will help students retain more information.
Limit the use of “run on” expressions, such as: <i>and, so on; etc.</i>	Examples include roses, tulips, daffodils, etc.	Examples include roses, tulips, daffodils, and other flowers.

Limit the use of coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) at the beginning of sentences.	And the study also compared...	The study also compared...
Academic writing does not typically utilize the first-person (<i>I/me/mine</i> or <i>we/our/ours</i>), or at least limits its use. Avoid first-person pronouns unless your field of writing frequently uses it, there is a specific writing genre (e.g. personal reflection), or it is only in certain parts of the paper (e.g. in introductions to state the purpose of research).	I can explain this fact by...	This fact can be explained by...

Word Choice

Informal Words	Potential Substitutions
Verbs get put look	collect, gain place, locate appear, seem
Nouns thing(s), stuff kid(s) people	<i>use a word more specific to the context</i> child(ren), daughter(s), son(s) experts, students, participants, or <i>any other specific word</i>
Adjectives and Adverbs like very/really/so lots/a lot of big	such as, for instance <i>remove and use a stronger adjective/adverb</i> large quantities of, a variety of substantial, significant

good	positive, considerable, high-quality
bad	negative, unhealthy

Works Consulted

Formal and Informal Language. Touro University. (n.d.).

<https://www.touro.edu/departments/writing-center/tutorials/formal-vs-informal-language/>

George Mason University. (2017, November 2). *Reducing Informality in Academic Writing*. The Writing Center.

<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/grammar-style/reducing-informality-in-academic-writing>