

A Formal English

Formal English is more common in writing, but you will also hear examples in more formal spoken English, e.g. announcements, speeches, television news, or discussions.

NOTICE IN CAFE: Only food **purchased** [bought] here may be eaten **on the premises** [here].

POLICE STATEMENT: The man is being questioned **regarding** [about] the robbery last night.

BUSINESS LETTER: I **regret to inform you** [I am sorry to say] that we are unable to ...

THEATRE ANNOUNCEMENT: The play will **commence** [start] in two minutes.

INFORMATION NOTICE: If you **require** [need] **further assistance** [more help], please contact the above address.

STATION ANNOUNCEMENT: The next train to **depart** [leave] from platform 7 will be the 7:22 to Reading.

FORMAL LETTER: We are not in a position to **grant** [give or allow] you a visa to this country.

AIRPORT ANNOUNCEMENT: Will passengers for Miami please **proceed to** [go to] gate 36.

B Informal English

Informal language is more common in spoken English, and also in most emails or letters to friends. The words and phrases in **bold** in these dialogues are all informal.

A: Who's Callum?

B: A **mate** [a friend] of mine.

A: Really?

B: Yeah, I see him **quite a bit** [often]; he's a nice **bloke** [man].

A: Toby, I'm afraid I can't **make it** [come] this evening.

B: Oh, that's a shame.

A: Yeah, I'm sorry, but **the thing is** [the problem is], Ella's not well, so I'll have to look after **the kids** [children].

B: OK, don't worry. There will still be twelve **or so** [about twelve] at the meeting, and I'll ring you later and let you know what happens.

A: **Cheers** [thanks]. That would be great.

A: I **bet** [I'm sure] you're hungry.

B: Yes, I'm **dying for** something to eat. [want to eat something very much]

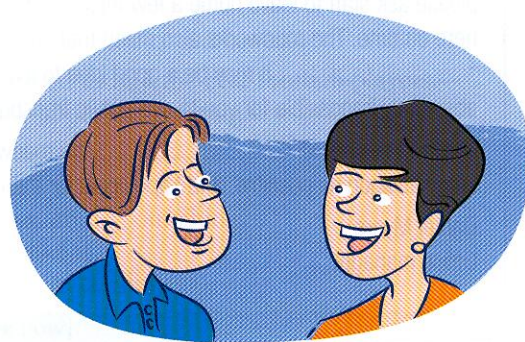
A: Well, I think you'll find some **stuff** in the fridge.

A: What **are you up to** this evening? [What are you doing?]

B: Nothing much. Why?

A: Well, would you like to see the new Coen Brothers film? I've heard it's **great**. [very good; *syn* terrific]

B: Really? My brother saw it and said it was **a load of rubbish**. [terrible]



Language help

We often use the uncountable noun **stuff**, especially in spoken English, to refer to an uncountable noun or a group of things. We do this when others know what we are talking about, or if we don't need to be exact. Put **this stuff** in the cupboard. [e.g. plates, food, toys] We carried our camping **stuff**. [equipment] What's **this stuff** in the fridge in the blue bottle? [liquid]

Exercises

95.1 Put the words into the correct column on the right.

depart	mate
cheers	commence
regarding	terrific
purchase	bloke
proceed to	kids

formal	informal
depart	

95.2 Now write a synonym for each of the words in 95.1.

depart	leave	mate	
cheers		commence	
regarding		terrific	
purchase		bloke	
proceed to		kids	

95.3 Replace the underlined words and phrases with more informal words or phrases.

- I'm sure your parents are pleased? I bet.....
- I'd love to come, but the problem is, my mother wants us to go and see her.
- I watched that new series on TV last night. It was absolutely terrible.
- What are you doing this weekend?
- I really want something to drink.
- None of them can come on Monday.
- Jamie is a friend of mine.
- We go there often.
- You can leave all those books, files and papers on the desk.
- We should be able to get approximately 40 on the coach.

95.4 Rewrite the underlined parts of this letter in more suitable formal English.

- regarding.....
-
-
-

Dear Mr Collins

We are writing about¹ your application to the council for a disabled parking space outside your home. We're sorry to say² that we are unable to allow³ this request as parking is the sole responsibility of the Highways Agency.

We suggest that if you need more help⁴, you should contact them on 01727 717 317.

95.5 Dictionaries will tell you if a word is *formal* or *informal/spoken*. Use your dictionary to find out if the underlined words here are *formal* or *informal/spoken*. What do they mean?

- I thought the film was a drag.
- Smoking isn't permitted.
- It's a scary film.
- This watch cost fifty quid.