Exceptions of Grammar Rules

Grammar > Advanced 8

Exercise 1 – Learning

There are two main types of language:

1. **Formal language** is used in official papers, business environments, academic writing, official speeches, legal documents, and other official settings.

2. **Informal language** is used in interactions with friends and family, and other informal settings.

When using informal speech, native speakers do not always follow the rules of grammar.

Here are some examples:

1. Rule: "Do not end a sentence with a preposition."

Formal: **With whom** should I study math?

Informal: **Who** should I study math **with**?

Tip: Many people argue that ending a sentence with a preposition is wrong only if the preposition is redundant ("Where are you at?" vs "Where are you?").

2. Rule: "A sentence must express a complete thought."

A sentence must have **a subject** (noun) and **a verb** (action).

In informal speech however, people often speak in **sentence fragments** - sentences that are missing something or that don't express a complete thought.

Formal: I would never **do something like that**!

Informal: I would never!

3. Rule: "Form complete questions."

In informal speech, people often form simplified questions.

Formal: **Did** you really say that to John?

Informal: You really said that to John?

4. Rule: "Never use two negative words in the same sentence."

To express a negative thought, we normally only negate one word in the sentence.

Formal: That **won't** do you **any good**.

Informal: That **won't** do you **no good**.

Tip: The first three examples are common among native speakers in most English-speaking countries. However, the fourth example, double negation, is only broken in **certain** dialects of English, such as African American Vernacular English and Southern American English.

Exercise 2 – Identifying

Identify which of the sentences are written in informal language and which are written in formal language.

Example: Finished work? → Informal.

Content:

1. Coming tomorrow?
2. She didn't dance with nobody.
3. Switched off the light and went to bed.
4. Who were you talking to?
5. He wondered where she had come from.
6. To whom do I owe the pleasure?
7. With whom do I have the pleasure of speaking?
8. Who am I speaking to?

Exercise 3 – Rephrasing

Rephrase the following sentences using informal language.

Example: The little girl has no one with whom to play. → The little girl has no one to play with.

Content:

1. Do you know from where she comes?
2. We didn't see anything.
3. Are you ready to go?
4. I wouldn't dare upset her.
5. I would never eat someone's food without asking.
6. I'm not talking to anybody until I finish this project.
7. Are you coming to my birthday party later?
8. I am already on my way.