# HUM231 - Presentation Skills and Technical Writing

Lecture 5 : Formal and Informal Writing

The Way We Communicate

- Think about how you communicate with different types of people.

- Do you use the same **tone**, **words**, and **phrases** to communicate with your friends as you do when you communicate with your parents or your teachers?

- If you do communicate with everyone in the same way throughout your life, you are likely to have difficulties.
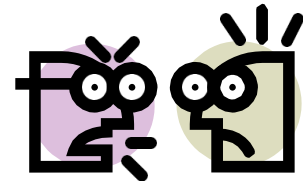
The Way We Communicate

- In every culture around the world, the way people are expected to communicate with **friends**, **strangers**, or **people in authority** over them **differs**.

The Way We Communicate

- Those who do not learn how to **communicate** in different ways to different people will have a hard time getting people to **listen** to and **understand** what they have to say.

- If you want people to hear what you have to say, it pays to learn how to **communicate** in different ways.

Audience

- When we communicate with others, we need to consider with whom we are communicating.

- That person or persons are our **Audience**.

Purpose

- When we are communicating, we also need to think about our purpose for communicating.

- Sometimes we communicate to **entertain**
- Sometimes we communicate to **inform**
- Sometimes we communicate to **persuade**

Formal and Informal Writing Styles

Formal and Informal Writing

- **<u>Formal Language:</u>** This type of language is characterized by a professional tone, precise vocabulary, and adherence to grammatical rules.
- It avoids common term, slang, and contractions.

- **<u>Informal Language:</u>** This is more conversational and can include slang, contractions, and a relaxed tone.
- It's often used in personal communication or informal settings.

Writing Style, Audience and Purpose

- To determine whether we should communicate informally or formally, we combine what we know about **Both** our **audience** and the **purpose** for our communication.

- Then, we pick the style that we think will best open our audience up to listen to our ideas.

Writing Style, Audience and Purpose

Audience	Purpose	Best Style to Use
Friends	Entertain	**Informal**
Teacher	Inform	**Formal**
Parents	Inform	**Informal**
Stranger(s)	Inform	**Formal**
Principal	Persuade	**Formal**
Friends	Inform	**Informal**
Stranger(s)	Persuade	**Formal**

Formal and Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
The tone is polite, but impersonal	The tone is more personal
Avoids using contractions and slang	Freely uses contractions and slang
Avoids using abbreviations	Freely uses abbreviations
Maintains a serious tone	May use humor or more casual tone
Uses proper punctuation and capitalization	Uses proper punctuation and capitalization
Word choice tends to be precise or technical	Word choice may be more vague; colloquial phrases may be used

Formal and Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
Avoids using first and second person pronouns (I, you, we, and me). Often uses "one" or "the reader" instead.	Freely uses first and second person pronouns
Sentence structure tends to be varied and includes lengthy and complex sentences	Sentence structure tends to be shorter; writing approximates the structure and rhythm of spoken English
Found most often in scholarly books and articles, technical reports, research papers, and legal documents	Found most often in personal e-mail and in some business correspondence, nonfiction books of general interest, and mass- circulation magazines

Formal vs. Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
The tone is polite, but impersonal	The tone is more personal

Formal

- To Whom it May Concern,
- Many people enjoy amusement parks.
- Studies show many people spend too much time on the computer.

Informal

- Hi Grandma,
- You like amusement parks, right?
- Do you spend too much time on the computer like many people do?

Formal vs. Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
Avoids using contractions and slang	Freely uses contractions and slang

Formal

- **It is** important to do homework.
- Going to an amusement park was a **thrilling experience**.
- It **does not** take a genius to **figure this out**.

Informal

- **It's** important to do homework.
- Going to an amusement park was **cool**!
- It **doesn't** take a genius to get **this**.

Formal vs. Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
Maintains a serious tone	May use humor or more casual tone

Formal

- Thank you for sending the package.
- It was a thoughtful thing to do.
- A person should want others to take time to read what they write.

Informal

- Thanks for the package.
- It was thoughtful of you.
- Who would be crazy enough to write something that nobody reads?

Formal vs. Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
Avoids using first and second person pronouns (I, you, we, and me).	Freely uses first and second person pronouns

Formal

- When **one** is preparing to cook, washing **one's** hands should be step one.
- The **author** advises the **reader** not to judge a book by its cover.

Informal

- When **you** are preparing to cook, wash **your** hands first.
- **I** think that **you** should not judge a book by its cover.

Formal vs. Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
Sentence structure tends to be varied and includes lengthy and complex sentences	Sentence structure tends to be shorter

Formal

- The lunch served in the cafeteria today was not very appetizing. The food was over cooked, smelled terrible, and tasted awful. Instead of serving students substandard food, the school should look into bringing in food from a caterer or local restaurant if possible.

Informal

- Lunch in the cafeteria today was nasty. It looked, smelled, and tasted bad. The school shouldn't serve nasty food like that. They should bring in food from a restaurant or something.

Formal vs. Informal Writing

Formal Writing Style	Informal Writing Style
Word choice tends to be precise or technical	Word choice may be more vague; colloquial phrases may be used

<u>Formal</u>

- The lunch served in the cafeteria today **was not very appetizing**. The food was over cooked, **smelled terrible**, and **tasted awful**. Instead of serving students **substandard food**, the school should look into bringing in food from a **caterer** or **local restaurant** if possible.
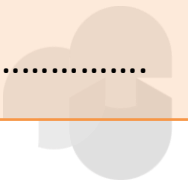
<u>Informal</u>

- Lunch in the cafeteria today **was nasty**. It looked, **smelled**, and **tasted bad**. The school **shouldn't serve nasty** food like that. They should bring in food from a **restaurant** or **something**.

Formal vs. Informal Writing: Exercise

- Now let's try to exercise changing from formal to informal writing.

Formal Writing	Informal Writing
The individual in question has submitted the necessary documentation.	………………………………………………………………
We would like to request your presence at the meeting.	………………………………………………………………
It is important to consider all available options.	………………………………………………………………
The results of the study indicate a significant correlation.	………………………………………………………………
I would appreciate your assistance with this matter.	………………………………………………………………

Formal vs. Informal Writing: Exercise

- Now let's try to exercise changing from formal to informal writing.

Formal Writing	Informal Writing
The individual in question has submitted the necessary documentation.	He turned in the paperwork.
We would like to request your presence at the meeting.	We'd love for you to join us at the meeting.
It is important to consider all available options.	Make sure to think about all your choices.
The results of the study indicate a significant correlation.	The study shows a strong link.
I would appreciate your assistance with this matter.	I could use your help with this.

Formal vs. Informal Writing: Exercise

- Now let's try to exercise changing from informal to formal writing.

Informal Writing	Formal Writing
I can't wait to hear back from you!	....
Let's touch base about the project later.	....
The new software is super easy to use.	....
We're gonna need more time to finish this.	....
It's a good idea to check your work.	....

Formal vs. Informal Writing: Exercise

- Now let's try to exercise changing from informal to formal writing.

| Informal Writing	Formal Writing
I can't wait to hear back from you!	I look forward to your response.
Let's touch base about the project later.	I would like to schedule a meeting to discuss the project.
The new software is super easy to use.	The new software is very user-friendly.
We're gonna need more time to finish this.	We will require additional time to complete this task.
It's a good idea to check your work.	It is advisable to review your work carefully.

Active and Passive Voices

Active and Passive Voices

- **Active Voice:** The subject of the sentence performs the action.

- It is preferred in technical writing because it is more direct and easier to understand. It clarifies who is responsible for an action, making the writing more engaging.

- **Passive Voice:** The subject receives the action, often resulting in less clarity.

- It can be appropriate in situations where the action is more important than who performed it, such as in scientific writing or when the active person is unknown.

Active and Passive Voices

Active

- The engineer designed the software.
- The engineer designed the new circuit board.
- The team conducted the experiment to test the hypothesis.
- The software developer fixed the bug in the code.
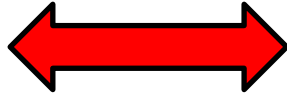
Passive

- The software was designed by the engineer.
- The new circuit board was designed by the engineer.
- The experiment was conducted by the team to test the hypothesis.
- The bug in the code was fixed by the software developer.

Active and Passive Voices: Exercise

- Now let's try to exercise changing the voice from active to passive and vice versa.

Active Voice	Passive Voice
The technician calibrated the instruments before the measurements.	………………………………………………
………………………………………………	The data was analyzed by researchers to identify trends.
The system processes the input data in real-time.	………………………………………………
………………………………………………	The objectives for the team were outlined by the project manager.
The scientists published their findings in a peer-reviewed journal.	………………………………………………

Active and Passive Voices: Exercise

- Now let's try to exercise changing the voice from active to passive and vice versa.

Active Voice	Passive Voice
The technician calibrated the instruments before the measurements.	The instruments were calibrated by the technician before the measurements.
Researchers analyzed the data to identify trends.	The data was analyzed by researchers to identify trends.
The system processes the input data in real-time.	The input data is processed by the system in real-time.
The project manager outlined the objectives for the team.	The objectives for the team were outlined by the project manager.
The scientists published their findings in a peer-reviewed journal.	The findings were published by the scientists in a peer-reviewed journal.

Sentence Structure

Sentence Structure

- **Simple Sentences:** Clear and straightforward. They convey one idea.

- Ex.: "The system processes data."

- **Complex Sentences:** These can convey more detailed information and relationships between ideas but should be used judiciously.

- Ex.: "The system processes data quickly, which improves overall performance."

Sentence Structure

- **<u>Bullet Points and Lists:</u>** utilize bullet points and numbered lists to break up complex information and make it easier to digest.

- This format is especially useful for instructions, features, or steps in a process.

Words and Phrases to Avoid

1.   **<u>Unclear Terms:</u>**
- Avoid vague words like **thing**, **stuff**, or **various** that don't provide clear meaning.

- Instead, be specific: "**components**" or "**features**."

2.   **<u>Redundant Expressions:</u>**
- Avoid redundancy, which can mess writing.

- Instead of "**free gift**," simply say "**gift**."

Words and Phrases to Avoid

3.   **<u>Jargon and Overly technical language</u>**

•   Limit the use of jargon unless the audience is familiar with it.

•   Ex.: Instead of **utilize**, consider using **use**.

4.   **<u>Overly Complex Words</u>** Favor simpler words that convey the same meaning.

•   Ex.: Instead of **facilitate**, Use **help** .