**Formal and informal language**

We use formal language in situations that are serious or that involve people we don’t know well. Informal language is more commonly used in situations that are more relaxed and involve people we know well.

Formal language is more common when we write; informal language is more common when we speak. However, there are times where writing can be very informal, for example, when writing postcards or letters to friends, emails or text messages. There are also examples where spoken English can be very formal, for example, in a speech or a lecture. Most uses of English are neutral; that is, they are neither formal nor informal.

**B** The kind of language you might use yourself in different situations depends on who you are talking to, and also how polite, tactful or direct **you** want to be. There are also different degrees of formality:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VERY FORMAL** | I owe you a deep debt of gratitude; |
|  | I should like to say how honoured I was to make your acquaintance. |
| **FORMAL** | It was a pleasure to meet you. |
|  | Thank you very much indeed. |
| **NEUTRAL** | Goodbye. Thank you. |
| **INFORMAL** | Bye for now. Thanks a lot. |
| **FAMILIAR** | Bye bye. Cheers. |

**Decide which of "the following phrases are:**

**VERY FORMAL FORMAL NEUTRAL INFORMAL OR FAMILIAR**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | A lot of people like fish and chips. | Neutral |
|  | Loads of people like fried chicken. | Familiar |
|  | Lots of people like curry. | Informal |
|  | Many people enjoy hot dogs: | Formal |
|  | A significant number of people prefer sandwiches. | Very Formal |
|  |  |  |
| 2 | Good to see you. | Formal / Neutral |
|  | Hello. | Informal |
|  | Hi there. | Familiar |
|  | It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. | Very formal |
|  | Pleased to meet you. | Formal |
|  |  |  |
| 3 | I'd like to introduce myself. My name's | Formal / Neutral |
|  | I'm - ... - what's your name? | Informal / Familiar |
|  | May I introduce myself, I'm ...... | Neutral |
|  | My name's ....... - who are you? | Informal / familiar |
|  |  |  |
| 4 | Do you feel like a drink? | Neutral |
|  | Like a drink? | Informal |
|  | Want a drink? | Familiar |
|  | May I offer you a drink? | Formal |
|  | Would you like me to get you a drink? | Formal |
|  |  |  |
| 5 | Can I have tea, please? | Neutral |
|  | I want tea, please. | Familiar |
|  | Tea, please. | Familiar |
|  | I'd like a cup of tea, please. | Neural |
|  | Would it be possible for me to have some tea? | very formal |
|  |  |  |
| 6 | One should always try to be polite. | formal |
|  | You should always try to be polite. | neutral |
|  |  |  |
| 7 | Give my best wishes to your parents. | formal |
|  | Give my love to Jan, won't you? | informal |
|  | Oh, love to Jim, by the way. | familiar |
|  | Remember me to your husband. | formal |
|  | Please give my best regards to your wife | formal |