Writing style

Formal and Informal

Formal writing tends to include the following:

* **Long and complex sentences:** Sentences tend to be compound and contain commas to link two ideas or use transitions like “Furthermore” and “To exemplify,”
* **Does not use contractions:** Would use “cannot” instead of “can’t”
* **Objective:** Does not offer personal opinions
* **Doesn’t use colloquial language:** You won’t see any slang or common everyday vocabulary
* **Diverse vocabulary words:** Vocabulary is of a higher level
* **Use of words that are subject-specific:** For example, if you are writing about biology, you’d use words like “epithelial cells” instead of “skin cells”
* **Use of third person:** Does not use first person pronouns like “I” or “me”

Informal writing includes the following:

* **Can use first person, second or third:** You can use any type of pronouns, including “I”
* **Can use slang:** The use of everyday language and slang terms can be used, such as “It was cool that…”
* **Active voice:** Sentences tend to be written with a subject acting on the verb, such as “We chilled the drinks and went out to the sea” instead of “The drinks were chilled…”
* **Personal emotional tone can be detected:** Since the writing is personal, it can include feelings and the sharing of emotions
* **Contraction and abbreviation:** It’s okay to use “can’t” instead of “cannot” or “it’s” instead of “it is”
* **Empathy:** You can put yourself in the shoes of your audience and address their problems directly. This shows the author as coming from a place of understanding their situation.

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| **BASIS FOR COMPARISON** | **FORMAL WRITING** | **INFORMAL WRITING** |
| Meaning | A formal writing style is one which is used for business, legal or professional purposes. | An informal writing style is used when we are writing for some personal or casual reason. |
| Sentences | Long and Complex Sentences | Short and Simple Sentences |
| Language | Formulaic | Direct |
| Voice | Passive Voice | Active Voice |
| Interjections | Not used | Used |
| Personal pronoun | Third person | First and second person |
| Tone | Professional and official | Personal and friendly |

Example:

1. When writing academically or professionally, it is important to show respect to your audience by electing to write in a formal style, rather than informally. This means that sentences are longer than usual and tend to feel complex. Writing complex sentences with hyper fluent vocabulary shows your audience that you are well-informed on the subject matter. Furthermore, this writing style depicts unbiased information eluding emotions and first-person pronouns from the content.
2. Formal writing feels harder than informal writing. I think it’s because I can’t use contractions or short sentences. The only reason I’d write informally is if I had to, like if it was professional or academic. But when I write like this about formal writing, it’s easier. My vocabulary doesn’t matter as much. As you can see, I still care about grammar. Writing like this feels like I am talking to a friend.

DIRECTIONS: Read each sentence below. Identify whether it uses formal or informal English. Write formal or informal on the line.

1. I am expecting a package to be delivered sometime today. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Will you please close the door on your way out? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Dude! I can’t believe you got into that program! \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. That is a very flattering color on you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. That’s our assignment? Seriously? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. Mr. Wasim, may I ask you a question? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. The girl waited patiently for her turn. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. Beats me. Nobody ever fills me in. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. Without a sound, the boys slipped up the stairs. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. I already told you to “drop it”. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_