

INFORMAL & FORMAL ENGLISH

Most words and expressions are **neutral**, and can be used in most situations. Occasionally we use formal language in spoken English, e.g. announcements (*The play will **commence** in three minutes.*), but more commonly in written English, e.g. business letters or official documents (*Keep your receipt as proof of **purchase**.*). Informal language is very common in spoken English, especially in conversation. Certain types of language are often informal:

- many phrasal verbs, e.g. **turn sb/sth down**
- uses of **get**, e.g. *Could you **get** me a pen?*
- many **idioms**, e.g. **keep an eye on sth**, **out of the blue**
- many examples of **vague** language, e.g. *thing(s)*, **stuff**, **sort of**.

Glossary

neutral not having any strong qualities (so in this context, neither formal nor informal).

commence FML begin.

purchase FML the act of buying sth. **purchase** v.

turn sb/sth down INF refuse an offer.

get sth INF go to a place and bring sth back. SYN **fetch sth**.

idiom an expression in which the meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words in it. **idiomatic** ADJ.

keep an eye on sth INF look after sth and make sure it is safe.

out of the blue INF suddenly and unexpectedly.

vague not clear or definite.

sort of INF not exactly, but partly (e.g. *Are you busy? Yes, sort of.*)

- 1 Formal, informal, or neutral? Write F, I, or N.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| ▶ get <u>I</u> | 4 commence _____ |
| 1 sort of _____ | 5 vague _____ |
| 2 purchase _____ | 6 out of the blue _____ |
| 3 stuff _____ | 7 neutral _____ |

spotlight **stuff**

Stuff INF is used to refer to something without using its name. We usually use **stuff** to replace uncountable nouns or plural countable nouns. *Do you need much of this **stuff**? (e.g. washing powder, soy sauce)*
*Put that **stuff** over there. (e.g. books, papers, files)*

- 2 Replace the underlined word with a suitable word or phrase that has the same meaning in the context.

- ▶ I made him a good offer but he refused it. turned it down
- 1 Do you want me to get your coat for you? _____
- 2 [announcement] The film will start in five minutes. _____
- 3 Where can I leave my clothes? _____
- 4 [business letter] There is a discount if you buy a certain quantity. _____
- 5 Then my parents arrived unexpectedly. _____
- 6 Could you look after my suitcase for a minute while I get a coffee? _____

- 3 Complete the sentences.

- ▶ My brother arrived out of the blue .
- 1 Do you understand? ~ Yes, sort _____ .
- 2 I don't know exactly where she lives, but I have a _____ idea.
- 3 Could you get some of that organic _____ the children like to drink?
- 4 'Keep an eye on something' is quite a common _____ in English.
- 5 I offered him a lot of money but he still _____ it down.
- 6 The walls are _____ of green, but it's not a strong colour; it's quite _____ .

B Common exchanges

A Hi. How's it going?

B Not bad. And you?

A Could you give me a hand?

B Yeah sure, no problem.

A What's up with Mark?

B I haven't a clue.

A What've you been up to lately?

B Nothing much.

A Take care. See you soon.

B Yeah. Cheers.

A Hang on. I'll be with you in a minute.

B OK, but hurry up.

4 Same or different? Write S or D.

- Yeah | Yes S
- no problem | nothing much _____
 - cheers | goodbye _____
 - recently | lately _____
 - late | lately _____
 - I don't know | I haven't a clue _____
 - How's it going? | How are things? _____
 - What've you been up to? | What's up? _____

5 Put these words and expressions in more informal English.

- Hello. Hi
- Yes. _____
 - Wait a moment. _____
 - What's the matter? _____
 - I don't know. _____
 - How are you? _____
 - What've you been doing? _____
 - Thank you. _____

6 Complete the dialogues.

- What's up? ~ Nothing. Why?
- See you soon. ~ Yeah. Take _____.
 - Hi. How's it _____? ~ Fine, thanks. And you?
 - Could you _____ me a hand? ~ Sure. No _____.
 - We have to go. Hurry _____. ~ OK. Just _____ on a minute.
 - What've you been up _____? ~ Nothing much.

7 Test yourself. Look at the glossary words and cover the meanings. What are the meanings?

Glossary

Hi	• INF hello.
How's it going?	• INF = How are you? SYN How are things?
give sb a hand	• help sb. SYN lend sb a hand.
yeah	• INF yes.
no problem	• INF used to say that you are happy to do sth.
What's up (with sb)?	• INF = What's the matter (with sb)?
I haven't a clue	• INF = I don't know.
What've you been up to?	• INF = What've you been doing?
lately	• recently.
nothing much	• INF nothing of importance.
take care	• INF used when saying goodbye.
hang on	• INF wait a moment. SYN hold on.
hurry up	• INF move or do sth quickly.

spotlight **cheers**

We use **cheers** to express good wishes when we have an alcoholic drink. It is also used in informal situations to mean either 'thank you' or 'goodbye'.

78 I can write a formal letter 🎧

Notes

If you are writing to a **stranger** or you don't know the person's name, use the phrases on the right.

If you know the person, use *Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr*, etc. and their surname.

If you know them quite well, you can use their first name.

For an informal letter to a good friend or family member, use the first name.
Note: *Love (from)* is not normally used by a man writing to another man.

Beginnings

Dear Sir
Dear Madam
Dear Sir or Madam

Dear Mr Wu
Dear Miss Gilberto

Dear Rosa
Dear Conrad

Dear Min Ho
Hi, Pavel

Endings

Yours faithfully
your name

Yours sincerely

(With) best wishes
Kind regards

Love (from)
All the best / Take care

45 Muswell Rd
London NW4
15 April 2008

Sunshine Holiday Cottages
Fore St
Truro

Dear Mr Ellison

Further to our telephone conversation of last Friday, I **enclose** a cheque for £50 as a **deposit** for the rental of Rainbow Cottage for one week, **commencing** 21 August. I **would be grateful if you could** send me **further** information about the property, **in particular, whether** there is parking **nearby**.

We are planning to bring our dog. If this is a problem, please **don't hesitate** to contact me.

I **look forward to** hearing from you.

Yours sincerely
Louise Robertson
Louise Robertson

Glossary

- stranger** • a person that you do not know.
- enclose sth** • put sth in an envelope or packet with sth else.
- deposit** • a sum of money which is your first payment for sth (you will pay the rest later). (You pay a **deposit on** or **for** sth.)
- commence** • FML begin.
- I would be grateful if you could ...** • used when you request sth.
SYN I **would appreciate it if you could ...**
- in particular** • SYNS **especially, particularly**.
- whether** • if.
- nearby** • not far away. SYN **close by**.
- don't hesitate to do sth** • don't feel worried about doing sth.
- look forward to sth** • think with pleasure about sth that is going to happen.
- hearing from you** • receiving your letter.

spotlight *further, further to*

Further ADJ has several meanings:

1) comparative of *far*: The station is **further** than the bank.

2) (only before a noun) more: Have you any **further** questions?

Further to ... FML is used in letters to mention a previous letter or conversation about the same subject:

Further to my letter of 5 July, I am happy to ...

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1 Cover the letter and answer these questions.

- ▶ Is Louise Robertson going to rent a cottage? Yes, she is.
- 1 Is this the first time she has contacted Mr Ellison? _____
- 2 Why is she sending him £50? _____
- 3 Will she be leaving or arriving on 21 August? _____
- 4 Are there any other things she needs to know? If so, what? _____
- 5 Whose address did she write on the right-hand side? _____
- 6 Whose address did she write on the left-hand side? _____
- 7 Did she write the date? If so, where? _____
- 8 Which beginning did she use? _____
- 9 Which ending did she use? _____
- 10 Could she end it 'Take care, Louise'? Why/Why not? _____

2 Tick (✓) the sentences that are correct and add a cross (X) to the sentences that are wrong.

- ▶ If you're writing to a family member, you can end it with 'Love' and your signature. ☒
- 1 If you begin 'Dear Maria', you can end it with 'Kind regards'. _____
- 2 If you begin your letter 'Dear Sir', you can end it with 'With best wishes'. _____
- 3 If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, you begin 'Dear Sir or Madam'. _____
- 4 If you write 'All the best' at the end, you could also write 'Take care'. _____
- 5 If you begin 'Dear Miss Periskic', you should end 'Yours faithfully'. _____
- 6 'Yours faithfully' is a common ending when you are writing to a stranger. _____

3 Which words are missing where the slashes (/) are? Write them at the end.

- ▶ Could you send me / details of the accommodation? further
- 1 I look forward / hearing / you. _____
- 2 If there's a problem, please / hesitate / ring me. _____
- 3 I / a photocopy / my identity card with the application form. _____
- 4 I would be / if you / phone me about the meeting. _____
- 5 Further / your letter / 7 April, I wish to confirm my booking. _____
- 6 I would / it if / could help me. _____
- 7 Please let me know / particular / there is a beach nearby. _____
- 8 I enclose a cheque for €30 as a / for the rental of the room. _____

4 Complete the letter.

40 Lincoln Rise, Churchfield, Yorkshire
14 January 2008

Hot Property Rentals
Barton St
Weatherfield

▶ Dear Mrs Stephens

(1) _____ to your letter of 12 January,
I (2) _____ a cheque for £500 as a (3) _____
_____ on Flat 7, Walsingham Buildings.
As we agreed, my rental contract will (4) _____
_____ on 1 February and run for one
year. I would be (5) _____ if you could

send me a receipt for the amount enclosed.

I would also (6) _____ it if you could let
me know (7) _____ I will be able to park
in the basement of the building. If not, will I be
able to find parking (8) _____?

If you need any (9) _____ information
from me, please don't (10) _____ to call
me.

Yours (11) _____,

Jurek Gorzy