Let's start with a little bit of fun! … Click on and drag these text bubbles over the right picture:

1.

What the heck are you sayin'?!

Would you please explain what you mean?



(drop here)



(drop here)

When you first started learning English, your teachers probably told you that English – unlike some other languages – doesn't have a formal and an informal mode.

As you just saw, … they were only *partly* right.

LIVEWORKSHEETS



To be respectful in Italian, for example, you address someone using the formal *lei* pronoun and the associated formal verb structure. Similarly, French uses *vous*...Spanish uses *usted*...German uses *Sie*, just to name a few.



2. What's the '*good*' *news* about English?

Click on the correct answer: _____

3. That's got to be great news, right? So, what's the '*bad*' news?



Click on the correct answer: _____

EEKS!



EEKS!

LIVEWORKSHEETS

So, how *does* English distinguish between formal & informal? Some are obvious, some aren't. Choose & click!

4. _____ formal _____ somewhere in between _____ informal *You are yelling at me.* (oh, no!)
5. _____ formal _____ somewhere in between _____ informal "Dr. Meyer, we are ready for you."
6. _____ formal _____ somewhere in between _____ informal "Star, we are ready for you."

It also depends on the culture. Which of these is stereotypically more formal than the other? Drag and drop to "plant" the flags.





_____ _____





LIVEWORKSHEETS

These differences between formal and informal and everything in between is called "**register**" in English.

7. The two extremes *may* not be too hard 😲 , but what about the in between registers? Choose & click:

For the next questions, click to tick ✓ the correct answer:

8. You probably already know this hint: 'contractions are less formal' _____ TRUE | _____ FALSE

9. This hint is *usually* correct: 'shorter words are less formal than longer ones' _____ TRUE | _____ FALSE

10. This hint is correct: 'bad grammar is less formal than correct grammar' _____ TRUE | _____ FALSE

11. This hint is *usually* correct: 'phrasal verbs are less formal, too' _____ TRUE | _____ FALSE

12. This hint is correct: 'slang and idioms are less formal, too' _____ TRUE | _____ FALSE

13. This hint is correct: 'complete sentences are less formal, too' _____ TRUE | _____ FALSE

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Before we look at more examples, let's see the five categories that there are in English. I've taken them from http://esl.about.com/od/advancedspeakingskills/a/v_register.htm, but in real life the differences may not be so clear.

FROZEN: set ways of saying / writing things (ex., pledges, prayers, legal formulas, …)





FORMAL: work / school, for 'superiors' (full sentences, avoid slang, idioms, phrasal verbs, and contractions)

CONSULTATIVE: work / school, for colleagues / peers (permits contractions, and phrasal verbs, but avoids slang, idioms, and incomplete sentences)





CASUAL: friends and family (often idiomatic, with slang, phrasal verbs, and incomplete or even incorrect sentences; can indicate belonging to a group)

INTIMATE: usually lovers or twins (like casual, but it is a private kind of language known to only the two speaking, and may have made-up words)



LIVEWORKSHEETS



Got it? OK, let's test your new abilities to distinguish the five kinds of register in English!

14. FROZEN? Click! _____

15. FORMAL? Click! _____

16. CONSULTATIVE? Click! _____

17. CASUAL? Click! _____

18. INTIMATE? Click! _____

Got it? I hope so!



You've got this!

N.B., All images used are Microsoft Clipart in the Word program used to create this file.

LIVEWORKSHEETS