

STYLE AND REGISTER

At the Advanced level, you should of course aim to write grammatically correct English. But is that enough? For example, it is grammatically correct to write "Give me a job", but that is not the way to write a successful job application. In fact, the employer is more likely to forgive a number of grammar or spelling mistakes than to employ an applicant whose letter was too rude or too informal. In the CAE exam, writing is assessed with this in mind: what effect would the piece of writing have on the person who is going to read it?

The ability to use the right style, whether you are writing a business letter or a holiday postcard, is one of the skills assessed in Paper 2; it is also examined throughout Paper 3.

But perhaps style is not the best word: you do not necessarily have to write stylishly. We could instead speak of *register*; the style appropriate to a particular kind of writing.

1.0 Story

This murder mystery in ten short texts is an exercise in recognizing register.

1. First, identify the origin of each text by writing the letter **A–J** by the descriptions of the texts. (Some of the descriptions do not correspond to any texts given.)
What aspects of each text helped you to decide?

Business letter _____ Short newspaper report _____ Advertisement _____

Tourist brochure _____ Spoken: polite conversation _____ Police officer's report _____

Newspaper review of restaurant _____ Back cover of a novel _____ Informal telephone conversation _____

Spoken: job interview _____ Love letter _____ Recipe _____

A

Main courses at Maximilien's range from duck in raspberry vinegar sauce to a really excellent hare, still shedding its shot-gun pellets, and presented as a Gaudiesque tower: slices of marvellously tender saddle on top of the braised leg (a little overdone), itself resting on buttery noodles. Another speciality of the house is the Andalucian rabbit with wild mushrooms

B

4 Return the rabbit to the pan. Cover with the wine. Season. Add the fresh thyme and simmer for 30–40 minutes with the lid on. Add the mushrooms and stir well.

C

'Tell me, Miss Lee, do you have any previous experience as a waitress?'
'Well, I did silver service at the Royal Hotel in Bognor for five years. That was before coming to Leicester. But since I've been here I've been assistant chef in the canteen at International Defence Systems.'
'And why have you given in your notice at I.D.S.?'
'Well, to tell you the truth, it was some pictures I saw on the television. And I realized that if

		it wasn't for the weapons we were selling them,
D Dear Mr Ball We were most impressed by your plans, which we received last week. Our representative in Europe, Colonel Lamont, will be contacting you upon his arrival in London.	E How much, did you say? This must be a bad line, I thought you said 5,000!... Sounds like an awful lot of money for a tummy ache! Foreigners, were they? Wouldn't trust 'em if I were you. Just you make sure you get the money up front, in cash... Here, you don't think they're trying to do him in, do you?... That'd be worth 50, not five... Tell you what, try some on Henry Hungerford first and see what happens.	F 'Wonderful restaurant, Stefan. Do you know, I think this is possibly the best hare I've ever eaten. And as for the St Emilion: I doubt you'd find as good a bottle as this anywhere in Paris. How are you getting on with the rabbit?'
I Having ascertained that the deceased had been seated at table 13, a window seat equidistant between the kitchen door and the ladies' toilets, I proceeded to question the manager about the waiting staff. He replied that Mr Ball's table had been attended by Mr Trumble, and that in the normal course of events neither of the two waitresses, Miss Lee and Miss Fairfax, would have had cause to serve at that table. He suggested that I question the waitresses themselves, but regretted that Mr Trumble was unavailable, having phoned in to say he had to take his dog to the vet.	H Words cannot describe how I feel when I think back to Friday night. And I do think of it, all the time, and of the look in your eyes when we said goodnight. Oh Stefan, say we can meet again soon! But we must be very careful, darling. My husband must never find out. Max has such a fiery temper, and so many sharp knives in his kitchen!	G Arms boss poisoned Mr Stefan Ball, managing director of the Leicester company, International Defence Systems, died in hospital at midday yesterday. He had complained of stomach pains after eating in a restaurant on Monday evening, and was rushed to hospital after being found unconscious in the morning. Mr Kevin Trumble, a waiter at the restaurant where Mr Ball had eaten, was also admitted to hospital with suspected food poisoning, but has now been discharged.
	J It's a recipe for murder when the sinister Colonel Lamont dines with brilliant young scientist Stefan Ball. But which of his many enemies puts paid to Stefan's career on his own expense account? And who is the mysterious Henry Hungerford? Stefan won't be eating at Maximilien's again, but Holmes finds this menu very much to his taste, and presents the solution on a plate.	

2. Identify the murderer by filling in the grid and making your own deductions

Name and job	Motive	On the other hand	Opportunity
Miss Lee Job:			
Maximilien Job:	His wife was having an affair with Stefan (text H)		
Colonel Lamount Job:			Could easily have poisoned Stefan's food while dining with him (text J)
Kevin Truckle Job:		Was himself poisoned (text G)	
Henry Hungerford Job:			

Formal and informal

One of the most important areas to master in terms of register is the difference between formal and informal English. Of course, there are many degrees of formality and most written English (including newspapers, magazines and novels) is situated somewhere between the two extremes.

Here is a list of some of the most characteristic features that differentiate formal and informal English, followed by some preliminary exercises. Many further exercises to practise the use of different registers, and particularly to distinguish between formal and informal usage, occur throughout the rest of the book.

Vocabulary

Why are some English words considered to be more polite or refined, whereas others which mean the same thing are thought rude or vulgar?

English vocabulary comprises words taken from many languages, particularly Anglo-Saxon, French and Latin. In 1066 the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of Britain were conquered by the French-speaking Normans. As French was the language of the ruling classes (and Latin the language of education), words derived from French or Latin have been considered more formal than those derived from the language of the Anglo-Saxons.

The table below compares relatively formal words of Latin/ French origin with their less formal alternatives, many of Anglo-Saxon origin. It is an illustration of a general tendency, not a conversion table; the choice of vocabulary always depends on the context. Supply the missing words.

Formal	Informal
Words of Latin/ French origin Single - word verbs	Words of Anglo-Saxon origin Phrasal verbs, idioms with get
Formal connecting words	Informal connecting words
Impersonal constructions <i>it is said that</i> <i>the price has been</i>	Active constructions <i>they say that</i> <i>they've put the price up</i> <i>you never know</i>

Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal
Verbs		Nouns	
to depart	to go	carnivore	meat-eater
to retain	_____	putrefaction	_____
to cease	_____	deficiency	_____

increased one never knows	
Abstract nouns	Modal verbs, adjectives, clauses, etc.
<i>Is happiness possible during unemployment? After clarification of the problem areas...</i>	<i>Can people be happy when they haven't got a job? When the bits everyone was getting wrong had been explained...</i>
Not ending with preposition; use of <i>whom</i> <i>To whom were you speaking</i>	Ending with preposition <i>Who were you speaking to?</i>
Complex sentences	Simple sentences
Use of inversion for conditionals and emphasis <i>Should you require further information, please contact...</i>	Inversion sometimes used for emphasis <i>Only then did I realize...</i>
No contractions in writing <i>I will, we would</i>	Contractions in writing <i>I'll, we'd</i>

to function	_____	vision	_____
to masticate	_____	residence	_____
to demonstrate	_____	respiration	_____
to reside	_____	somnambulist	_____
_____	to seem	comprehension	_____
_____	to shorten	perspiration	_____
_____	to end		
_____	to help	Adjectives	
_____	to begin	incorrect	wrong
_____	to want	amiable	_____
_____	to get	vacant	_____
_____	to free	insane	_____
_____	to eat	inexpensive	_____
Adverbials		_____	lively
subsequently	next/ later	_____	better
principally	_____	_____	childish
_____	so	_____	enough
_____	at first	_____	whole
_____	in the end	_____	older