

## A

## Formal English

Formal English is more common in writing, but you will also hear examples in more formal spoken English, e.g. announcements, speeches, television news, or discussions.

NOTICE IN A CAFE: Only food **purchased** [bought] here may be eaten **on the premises** [here].

BUSINESS LETTER: I **regret to inform you** [I am sorry to say] that we are unable to ...

INFORMATION NOTICE: If you **require** [need] **further assistance** [more help], please contact the above address.

FORMAL LETTER: We are not in a position to **grant** [give or allow] you a visa to this country.

POLICE STATEMENT: The man is being questioned **regarding** [about] the robbery last night.

THEATRE ANNOUNCEMENT: The play will **commence** [start] in two minutes.

STATION ANNOUNCEMENT: The next train to **depart** [leave] from platform 7 will be the 7:22 to Reading.

AIRPORT ANNOUNCEMENT: Will passengers for Miami please **proceed to** [go to] gate 36.

## B

## Informal English

Informal language is more common in spoken English, and also in most emails or letters to friends. The words and phrases in **bold** in these dialogues are all informal.

A: Who's Callum?

B: A **mate** [a friend] of mine.

A: Really?

B: Yeah, I see him **quite a bit** [often]; he's a nice **bloke** [man].

A: Toby, I'm afraid I can't **make it** [come] this evening.

B: Oh, that's a shame.

A: Yeah, I'm sorry, but **the thing is** [the problem is], Ella's not well, so I'll have to look after the **kids** [children].

B: OK, don't worry. There will still be twelve **or so** [about twelve] at the meeting, and I'll ring you later and let you know what happens.

A: **Cheers** [thanks]. That would be great.

A: **I bet** [I'm sure] you're hungry.

B: Yes, **I'm dying for** something to eat. [want to eat something very much]

A: Well, I think you'll find some **stuff** in the fridge.

A: What **are you up to** this evening? [What are you doing?]

B: Nothing much. Why?

A: Well, would you like to see the new Coen Brothers film? I've heard it's **great** [very good; syn **terrific**].

B: Really? My brother saw it and said it was a **load of rubbish** [terrible].



## Language help

We often use the uncountable noun **stuff**, especially in spoken English, to refer to an uncountable noun or a group of things. We do this when others know what we are talking about, or if we don't need to be exact. Put this **stuff** in the cupboard. [e.g. plates, food, toys] We carried our camping **stuff** [equipment]. What's this **stuff** in the fridge in the blue bottle? [liquid]

## Exercises

### 95.1 Put the words into the correct column on the right.

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| depart     | mate     |
| cheers     | commence |
| regarding  | terrific |
| purchase   | bloke    |
| proceed to | kids     |

| formal        | informal |
|---------------|----------|
| <i>depart</i> |          |
|               |          |

### 95.2 Now write a synonym for each of the words in 95.1.

|            |              |          |  |
|------------|--------------|----------|--|
| depart     | <i>leave</i> | mate     |  |
| cheers     |              | commence |  |
| regarding  |              | terrific |  |
| purchase   |              | bloke    |  |
| proceed to |              | kids     |  |

### 95.3 Replace the underlined words and phrases with more informal words or phrases.

- I'm sure your parents are pleased? *I bet*
- I'd love to come, but the problem is, my mother wants us to go and see her.
- I watched that new series on TV last night. It was absolutely terrible.
- What are you doing this weekend?
- I really want something to drink.
- None of them can come on Monday.
- Jamie is a friend of mine.
- We go there often.
- You can leave all those books, files and papers on the desk.
- We should be able to get approximately 40 on the coach.

### 95.4 Rewrite the underlined parts of this letter in more suitable formal English.

- regarding
- 
- 
- 

Reply
Forward

To M. Collins x 7:03 AM (3 hours ago)

Dear Mr Collins

We are writing about<sup>1</sup> your application to the council for a disabled parking space outside your home. We're sorry to say<sup>2</sup> that we are unable to allow<sup>3</sup> this request as parking is the sole responsibility of the Highways Agency.

We suggest that if you need more help<sup>4</sup>, you should contact them on 01727 717 317.

### 95.5 Dictionaries will tell you if a word is formal or informal/spoken. Use your dictionary to find out if the underlined words here are formal or informal/spoken. What do they mean?

- I thought the film was a drag.
- Smoking isn't permitted.
- It's a scary film.
- This watch cost fifty quid.