Formal and Informal English

Practice worksheet • B2–C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

Remember: Formal English should be clear, natural and appropriate to the reader. Everyday words are not automatically wrong in formal writing.

1. Match the expressions

Match each everyday expression (1–8) with its more formal equivalent (A–H).

1. put off ____	**A.** establish
2. find out ____	**B.** investigate
3. look into ____	**C.** decrease
4. come up with ____	**D.** postpone
5. get rid of ____	**E.** eliminate
6. bring up ____	**F.** raise (a topic)
7. set up ____	**G.** develop (an idea)
8. go down ____	**H.** determine

2. Choose the more appropriate expression

Circle the expression that best suits the formal context given.

1. In a report: Sales **fell sharply / took a nosedive** in March.

2. In a job application: I wish to **get / obtain** further information about the position.

3. In a complaint: The issue has not yet been **sorted out / resolved**.

4. In a formal proposal: The new scheme would **assist / give a hand to** local residents.

5. In an official notice: All applicants must **retain / hang on to** a copy of the form.

6. In a report: The venue does not have **a load of / sufficient** space for the event.

Sentence transformations

Practise choosing words and structures to suit a formal context.

3. Rewrite in a more formal style

Rewrite each sentence for a professional email or report. Use the word in brackets without changing the original meaning.

1. We can't find out why the system failed. (determine)

2. They've put off the interview until Friday. (postponed)

3. We need to look into these complaints. (investigate)

4. The number of applications went down last month. (decreased)

5. Please tell us if you need help. (assistance)

6. The team came up with a new plan to cut costs. (developed)

4. Correct the register

The sentences below are from formal texts, but some expressions are too casual, direct or unnecessarily complicated. Rewrite them in a natural, appropriate style.

1. The event was ace and everyone loved it.

2. I want you to fix this problem immediately.

3. The aforementioned individual proceeded to utilise the facilities.

4. We discussed a load of stuff at the meeting.

Writing with the right tone

Move from individual sentences to a complete text.

5. Improve the style

Rewrite each sentence using the instruction in brackets. Keep the main idea.

1. This approach always works. (Use cautious language.)

2. The plan was costly, but it was effective. (Use however with correct punctuation.)

3. The researchers collected the data in May. (Use the passive voice.)

4. More employees are working from home. (Use the noun increase.)

6. Rewrite a professional email

You are writing to a course administrator you have never met. Rewrite the email below in an appropriate formal style. Include all three requests and a suitable greeting and closing. Aim for 70–100 words.

Hi,
I want to find out about your advanced English course. Can you send me the timetable and tell me how much it costs? Also, do I have to do a test before I join? Write back soon.
Thanks,
Alex

Answer key

Suggested answers • Other natural and appropriate answers are possible in Exercises 3–6.

1. Match the expressions

1 D • 2 H • 3 B • 4 G • 5 E • 6 F • 7 A • 8 C

2. Choose the more appropriate expression

1 fell sharply; 2 obtain; 3 resolved; 4 assist; 5 retain; 6 sufficient.

3. Rewrite in a more formal style

1. We cannot determine why the system failed.

2. They have postponed the interview until Friday.

3. We need to investigate these complaints.

4. The number of applications decreased last month.

5. Please inform us if you require assistance.

6. The team developed a new plan to reduce costs.

4. Correct the register

1. The event was excellent and was well received by everyone.

2. I would appreciate it if you could resolve this issue promptly.

3. The individual used the facilities.

4. We discussed a number of issues at the meeting.

5. Improve the style

1. This approach appears to be effective in many cases.

2. The plan was costly; however, it was effective.

3. The data were collected in May.

4. There has been an increase in the number of employees working from home.

6. Model email

Dear Sir or Madam,
I am writing to enquire about your advanced English course. I am interested in enrolling and would be grateful if you could provide me with further information about the course timetable and the total fees. Could you also let me know whether applicants are required to take a placement test before joining the course?
Thank you for your time and assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.
Yours faithfully,
Alex