



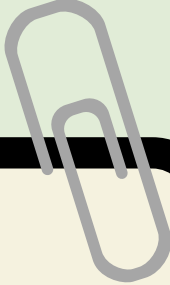
# **FORMAL LISTENING & SPEAKING**

**Aj.Matt Hayeesani**

**June 27, 2022**



**WHAT IS  
FORMALITY?**

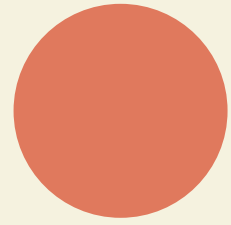


**WHO  
SHOULD**

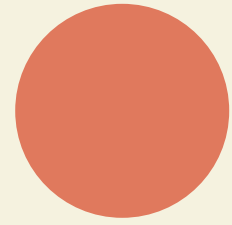


**WHAT  
VARIABLES**

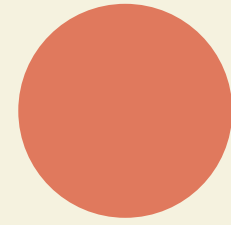
# CONSIDERING THIS



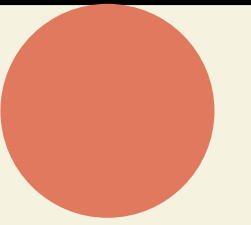
What  
about  
the  
cinema?



Are you  
on for  
the  
cinema?

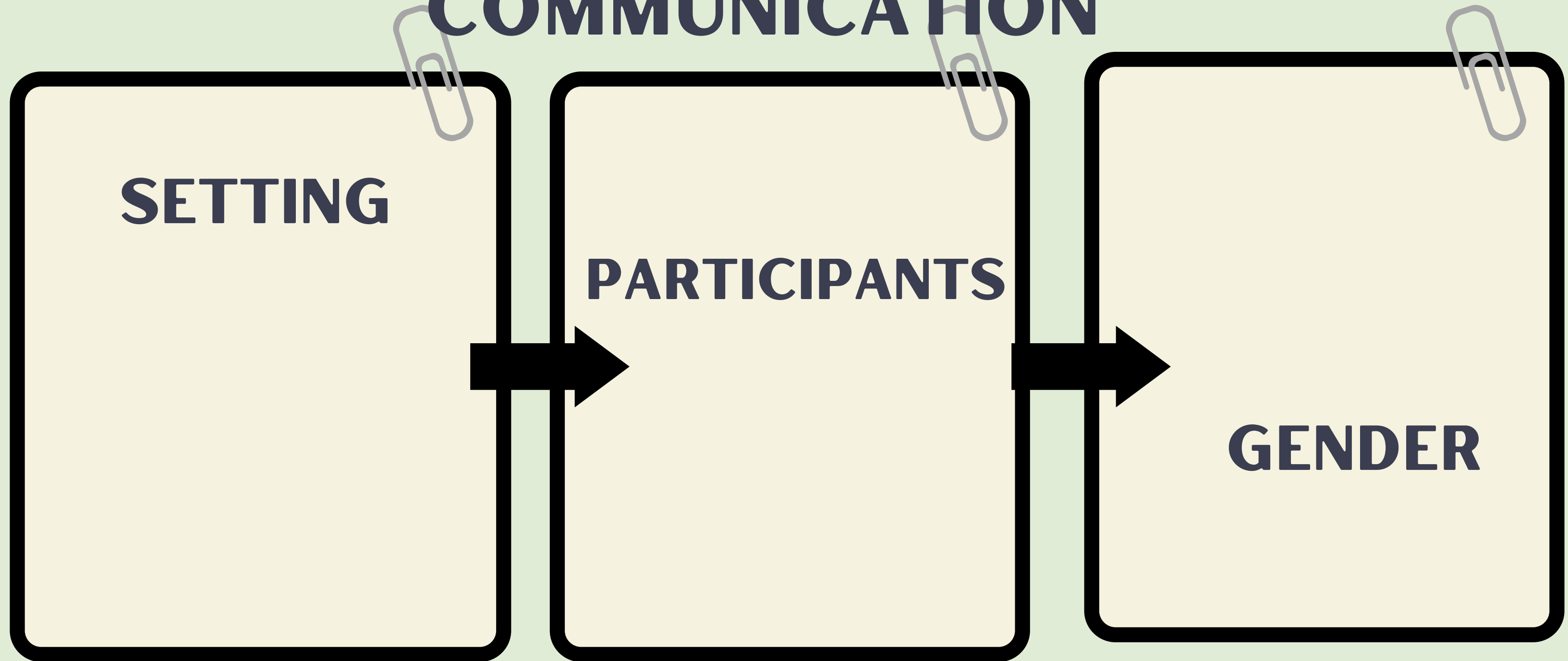


Cinema?

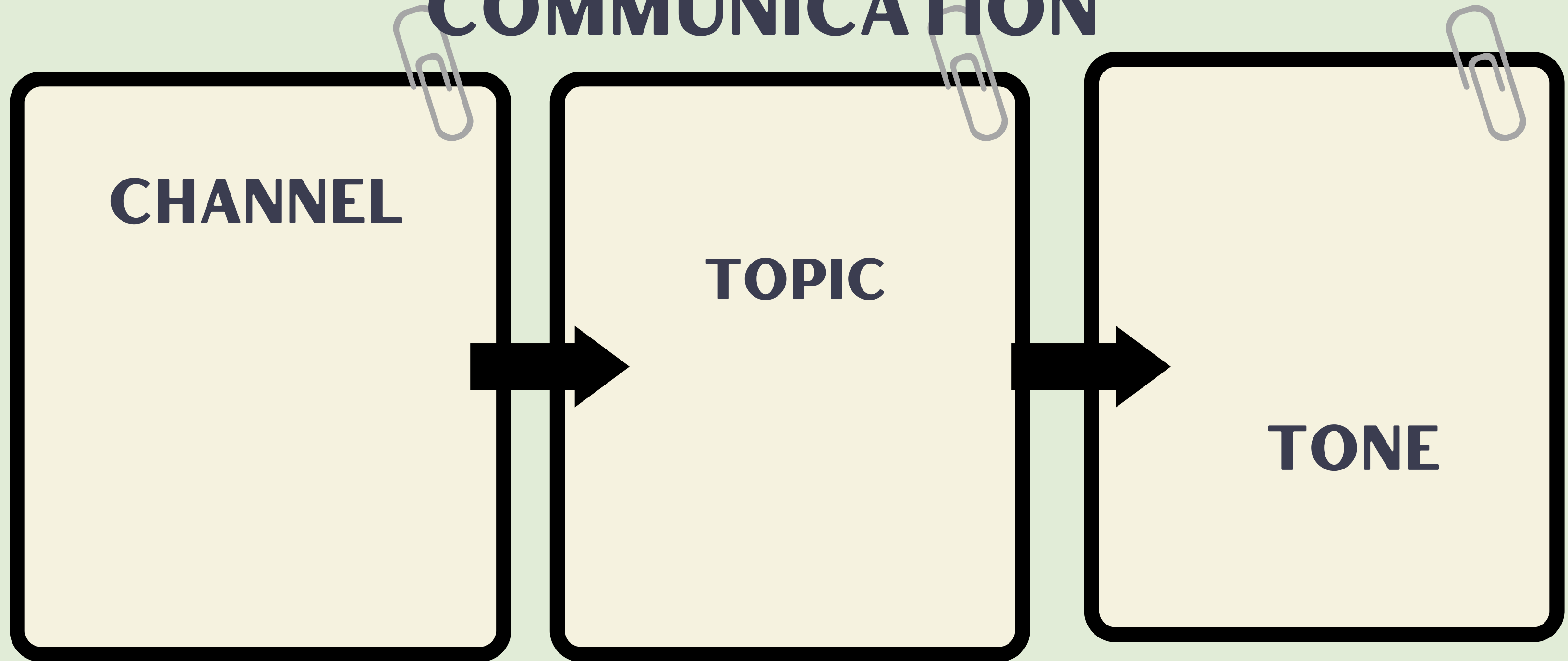


There's  
a good  
film on  
at the  
cinema.

# VARIABLES TO SUCCEED COMMUNICATION



# VARIABLES TO SUCCEED COMMUNICATION



Source: Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson Longman Education.

Appropriate Language Function (Ch 2, B3 Appropriacy & Register, pp. 28-29)

### **B3 Appropriacy and register**

A feature of language functions is that they do not just have one linguistic realisation; the following phrases, for example, show only some of the possible ways of inviting someone to the cinema:

*Would you like to come to the cinema?*

*How about coming to the cinema?*

*D'you fancy the cinema?*

*I was wondering if you might like to come to the cinema tonight?*

*What about the cinema?*

*Are you on for the cinema?*

*Cinema?*

*There's a good film on at the cinema.*

etc.

Thus, when we attempt to achieve a communicative purpose (such as getting someone to agree to an invitation), we have to choose which of these language forms to use. Which form, given our situation, is the most appropriate? The same is true, of course, in our choice of language in letters, emails and text messages.

Six of the variables which govern our choice are listed below:

- **Setting:** we speak differently in libraries from the way we do in night clubs. We often use informal and spontaneous language at home, whereas we may use more formal pre-planned speech in an office or work environment.
- **Participants:** the people involved in an exchange – whether in speech or writing – clearly affect the language being chosen. However egalitarian we may want to be, we often choose words and phrases in communication with superiors which are different from the words and phrases we use when talking to, writing to or texting our friends, members of our families or colleagues of equal status to us.
- **Gender:** research clearly shows that men and women typically use language differently when addressing either members of the same or the opposite sex. This is especially true of conversation. Women frequently use more concessive language than men, for example, and crucially, often talk less than men in mixed-sex conversations.
- **Channel:** there are marked differences between spoken and written language. But spoken language is not all the same: it is affected by the situation we are in. Are we speaking face to face or on the telephone? Are we speaking through a microphone to an unseen audience or standing up in a lecture hall in front of a crowd? The examples at the beginning of this chapter have shown how the writing channel (Internet, snailmail or SMS text) will also affect how we write.
- **Topic:** the topic we are addressing affects our lexical and grammatical choices. The words and phrases that we use when talking or writing about a wedding will be different from those we employ when the conversation turns to particle physics. The vocabulary of childbirth is different from the lexical phrases associated with football. The topic-based vocabulary we use is one of the features of *register* – the choices we make about what language to employ.
- **Tone:** another feature of the register in which something is said or written is its tone. This includes variables such as formality and informality, politeness and impoliteness. For example, sophisticated women's magazines may talk of *make-up*, but teenage magazines sometimes call it *slap*. Using high pitch and exaggerated pitch movement (intonation – see F2 below) is often more polite than a flat monotone when saying things such as *Can you repeat that?*

These, then, are some of the factors that influence our choice of language. When we have our students study the way language is used in speaking or writing, we will want to draw their attention



*By* ARCHITAMITTRA

*Last updated:* APRIL 13, 2022

# **How to Speak Formal English: Just Swap These Polite Words for Ones You Already Know!**

Formal English should be used at the workplace and school, with people you don't know very well and in any other situation where you want to appear



professional and polite.

There are some English words that you might use all the time, without realizing there are more formal alternatives.

In this post, I'll show you how to easily **speak formal English like a native speaker by simply making some adjustments to your vocabulary.**

## Contents

### What Formal English Can Do for You

Mastering formal English will take you a long way in life. Here are some of the numerous benefits it'll bring you.

- **Create wonderful first impressions:** Whether it's an interview, a first day at a new job or meeting your in-laws, formal language skills will surely impress the English-speakers you meet.
- **Become more confident, diplomatic and persuasive:** When you know how to speak politely but firmly, you'll become more comfortable with yourself as an English speaker and will fit in naturally in many situations.
- **Make valuable connections in networking events:** Formal English makes it easier for you to approach other people and communicate clearly in professional settings.
- **Automatically improve your writing skills:** Work emails, cover letters, reports or essays all require formal English skills. If you master



formal English your writing skills will automatically be better and more versatile. This is a crucial skill for an advanced learner of English.

- **Deliver better talks and presentations:** You won't ever be nervous before a conference and people will actually be interested in hearing what you have to say!

## 5 Rules of Formal English (With Lots of Words You Can Use Right Away)

Formal English isn't a new language or very different from the English you're familiar with. It's just more "official" and grammatically precise.

In fact, much of formal English relies on simply **substituting a common, colloquial word for a more formal one.**

Knowing the right words for the right situation is a skill that every confident speaker has mastered. You can do the same by gradually expanding your formal vocabulary.

Below, we'll show you some formal alternatives to common informal words you may already use regularly. Then we'll show you formal alternatives to other types of English words in both spoken and written English.

To truly master the difference between informal and formal English, practice with **real English videos on FluentU.**

**FluentU** takes authentic videos—like music videos, movie trailers, news and inspiring talks—and turns them into personalized language learning lessons.



For example, compare the casual English in this joke song to the structured, polite language in [this news report](#) about (very!) young entrepreneurs.

Better yet, you never have to worry about missing a word. Every FluentU video comes with **interactive captions**, flashcards, fun quizzes, vocabulary lists and more so you **actively improve your English while you watch**. Take this immersive practice anywhere on the iOS or Android apps.

## 1. Remember These Formal Alternatives to Common Informal Words

These are just some of the most common formal/informal word pairings you can consider. For a longer list, you can check out the helpful charts on engVid as well as this free PDF guide that even comes with some practice exercises.

Instead of *find out*, use *ascertain*.

We need to ascertain who to speak with about this issue.

Instead of *sorry*, use *I apologize*.

I apologize for the technical errors.

Instead of *show*, use *demonstrate*.

This report demonstrates the importance of widening our audience.

Instead of *I think*, use *In my opinion*.



In my opinion, the best course of action is...

Instead of *pricey* or *costly*, use *expensive*.

That shipping service may be too expensive for our budget.

Instead of *let*, use *permit* or *allow*.

Would you allow me to sit at this table?

## 2. Swap Formal for Informal Plurals

Avoid casual words like *tons*, *loads* or *heaps*.

Instead, you can use *many*, *much* or *several*.

Informal: "I have *tons of* books on this topic at home."

Formal: "I have *several* books on this topic at home."

## 3. Use "Could" and "May" Instead of Informal Modals

Modal verbs are a type of "helping verb" that often express permission, necessity or possibility.

For example, in the sentence "Tim can direct the project," *can* is the modal verb indicating that Tim has permission to direct the project. In English, some modal verbs are considered more formal or polite than others. Some common examples are below.

Instead of *can*, use *could*. This is especially important when asking questions.



We could make a reservation for your clients at the bistro.

Could I use your restroom, please?

Instead of *might*, use *may*.

I may schedule the meeting for Friday, depending on her schedule.

*May* is another formal alternative for *can* in questions or when expressing permission.

May I use your restroom, please?

You may leave work early.



#### 4. Avoid Abbreviations and Short Forms

Short forms and abbreviations are usually **spelled out fully** in formal written English.

For instance, we say *cell phone* or *mobile phone* instead of *cell*, *examination* instead of *exam*, *television* instead of *telly* or *TV* and *photograph* instead of *pic*.

Could you please repeat your cell phone number?

The date of the examination is March 23.

This photograph needs more editing before it is published.

Spell out common abbreviations like *as soon as possible* instead of simply typing *ASAP* and *congratulations* instead of *congrats*.

Could you send me the report as soon as possible? Thanks!

Congratulations on your new job, Tom! I am extremely proud of how far you have come.

Similarly, be sure to **avoid text-speak or internet slang** in formal contexts, even in emails.

So if someone says or writes something funny, make sure you don't reply with "lol :)" or "lmao" or "omg!"

Instead, you can respond with "That is hilarious!" or something similar.

## 5. Write with Formal Greetings and Farewells

Just like how you call others by their titles in a formal setting, you also use such titles when it comes to written correspondences.

In emails, letters, memos and other forms of official correspondence, you also need to make sure you're addressing the recipient politely.

Begin with a formal greeting. Use *Dear [name/title]* as opposed to *hey, hi*, etc.

Dear clients.

Dear Anush...



Keep it formal and simple by signing off with *Sincerely*. Avoid more informal sign-offs like *cheers* or *best*.

Sincerely,

Dr. Doe.

Formal English is bound by a few simple rules, so learning it shouldn't pose a problem. In fact, once you're used to formal English, switching back and forth between formal and informal language becomes easy. Developing a formal vocabulary will take some time, but it will be a rewarding and enriching exercise. Learn and use a few words each day! And if you supplement your learning with real-world conversations with friends and colleagues, you're all set to become a fluent and confident speaker of the English language.



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***Archita Mitra** is a freelance writer, journalist, editor and educator. Feel free to check out her blog or contact her for freelancing/educational inquiries.*