



WRITING CENTER

- Cullom-Davis Library 311/312 • 309-677-3254 • bradley.edu/writeright •

Formal/Professional vs. Informal/Conversational Tone

Formal and informal language serve different purposes. The tone, the choice of words and the way the words are put together vary between the two styles. Formal language is less personal than informal language. It is used when writing for professional or academic purposes. Formal language does not use contractions or first person pronouns such as 'I' or 'We'.

Informal language is more casual and spontaneous. It is used when communicating with friends or family either in writing or in conversation. It is used when writing personal emails, text messages and in other informal writing settings. The tone of informal language is more personal than formal language.

Use Formal Writing When:

- Writing professionally (reaching out to a boss or professor)
- Academic writings (essays, research papers, etc.)
- Job applications (resume writing, CVs, and cover letters)
- Reaching out to someone you do not know

Use Informal Writing When:

- Writing to a friend
- Sharing a story or writing a personal blog
- Writing creatively
- Writing dialogue and conversations
- Writing an outline

Examples of formal and informal language are shown below:

Formal/Professional:

The research project will not continue next year.

The patient recovered from his illness.

The results are not believed to be accurate.

Informal/Conversational:

The research project won't continue next year.

The patient got over his illness.

I don't believe that the results are accurate.

Still unsure about the difference between formal/professional and
informal/conversational tone?

Make an appointment with the Writing Center!

Library, Room 311/312

www.bradley.edu/writeright