

FORMAL VS. INFORMAL WRITING

Definitions

Formal

adj.

done in accordance with rules;
suitable for an official or
important situation or occasion

Informal

adj.

having a relaxed, friendly, or
unofficial style

Rules for Formal Writing

Formal writing follows a list of conventions (rules) that generally include the following:

- Avoid contractions
- Avoid slang and swear words
- Avoid first and second person pronouns

Rules for Formal Writing

avoid
contractions

DO	DO NOT
HAVE NOT	HAVEN'T
WOULD NOT	WOULDN'T
I HAVE	I'VE

Rules for Formal Writing

avoid slang
and swear
words

DO	DO NOT
The men...	The dudes...
I cannot believe...!	Holy ----!

Rules for Formal Writing

avoid first and
second person
pronouns

(in essays)

First Person Pronouns	Second Person Pronouns
I me my mine we our(s) us	you yours

Is it Formal or Informal?

Ask yourself three questions:

- What is the **purpose** of the writing?
- What **type** of writing is it?
- Who is the **audience**?

Formal Writing

- Research papers
- Academic essays and short-answer responses
- Resumes
- Cover letters
- Letters of recommendations
- Letters and emails to supervisors, teachers, coaches, etc. (people of authority)

Informal Writing

- Letters and emails to friends or family members
- Text messages to friends and family members