People speak and write in different ways on different occasions. There are, however, some words and structures which are mainly used in formal situations – for example report writing, business meetings, conferences, polite conversations etc.

There are also some words and expressions which are mainly used in informal situations – conversations with friends etc.

In writing, we almost always use formal words and expressions. Speech, on the other hand, is often more informal.

**Grammar**

Some grammatical structures have two forms – formal and informal.

For example, in informal speech and writing we use contracted auxiliary verbs and negatives.

Formal: *It is* working.
Informal: *It’s* working.
Informal: *He’s* gone.
Formal: *He has* gone.

**Prepositions**

In informal language prepositions often come at the end of certain structures.

Formal: *To* which nation does he belong?
Informal: Which nation does he belong *to?*

Some determiners are followed by singular verbs in formal language and plural verbs in informal language.

Formal: *Neither* of us *likes* him.
Informal: *Neither* of us *like* him.

Some pronouns have different forms in formal and informal language.

Formal: *Whom* did they elect?
Informal: *Who* did they elect?

In informal language we often leave out words.

Formal: *She said that* she would come.
Informal: *She said* she would come.
Formal: *Have you* seen Annie?
Informal: **Seen** Annie?

**Vocabulary**

Some words are mainly used in informal situations. In formal situations other words or expressions are used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fix</td>
<td>Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin / start</td>
<td>commence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks</td>
<td>Thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What? / Pardon? / Sorry?</td>
<td>I beg your pardon?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>