Formal & Informal Register

Register & tone · C1 · Answers on the last page.

THE RULE

Register is the level of formality. Match it to the reader and the situation.

Formal (reports, official emails, essays): no contractions · single-word verbs, not phrasal · precise, Latinate vocabulary · passive & impersonal · formal linkers. *'We regret to inform you that…'*

Informal (friends, chats): contractions · phrasal verbs & idioms · personal and direct · exclamation marks. *'Sorry, I can't make it!'*

Pairs: buy/purchase · get/obtain · need/require · help/assist · ask for/request. Letters: Dear Sir/Madam Sir/Madam → Yours faithfully · Dear Mr X → Yours sincerely.

1 Formal or informal? Circle F or I.

		F / I
1	Could you possibly assist me with this matter?	F / I
2	Gimme a hand, will you?	F / I
3	We regret to inform you of our decision.	F / I
4	Thanks a million!	F / I
5	I am writing to request further information.	F / I
6	Wanna grab a coffee later?	F / I
7	Please do not hesitate to contact us.	F / I
8	See ya later!	F / I

2 Replace each informal verb with a more formal single-word verb.

1 find out → _____

2 put up with → _____

3 look into → _____

4 set up → _____

5 get → _____

6 need → _____

7 buy → _____

8 help → _____

3 Rewrite these sentences in a more formal register.

1 *I wanna know why you didn't answer.*

2 *Can you send me the info ASAP?*

3 *We're really sorry about the mix-up.*

4 *Thanks for getting back to me.*

5 *The company's gonna look into it.*

4 Choose the more formal option.

1 We (need / require) further information.

2 Please (ask for / request) a refund in writing.

3 I am writing to (complain / moan) about the service.

4 The report (shows / goes to show) that sales fell.

5 We (can't / are unable to) process your order.

6 (Thanks / Thank you) for your understanding.

5 Letter & email conventions — complete each gap.

1 You don't know the name. Start: Dear Sir or Madam. End: Yours _____.

2 You know the name (Dear Ms Cole). End: Yours _____.

3 Formal opening: I am writing with _____ to your advertisement.

4 Formal request: I would be _____ if you could reply soon.

5 Informal sign-off to a friend: (Yours faithfully / Cheers) → _____.

Soluciones

Answer key. Task 3 shows model answers (other formal versions are possible).

1 · Formal or informal?

1 F 2 I 3 F 4 I 5 F 6 I 7 F 8 I

2 · Formal single-word verbs

1 discover (ascertain) 2 tolerate 3 investigate 4 establish
5 obtain / receive 6 require 7 purchase 8 assist

3 · Rewrite (model answers)

1 I would like to know why you did not reply.
2 Could you please send me the information as soon as possible?
3 We sincerely apologise for the confusion.
4 Thank you for your reply.
5 The company will investigate the matter.

4 · More formal option

1 require 2 request 3 complain 4 shows 5 are unable to 6 Thank you

5 · Letter & email conventions

1 Yours faithfully 2 Yours sincerely 3 reference 4 grateful 5 Cheers