



**FORMAL vs INFORMAL***Lead-in*

1. Read the texts below. What differences in style can you notice? Discuss with your classmates.

## #1

A generation used to ready meals and instant information from the internet now will not wait for even the most important things in life. Two-fifths of 18-to-29-year-olds do not go to the doctor because they can't bear waiting for an appointment. A sixth have become ill as a result. Around a third don't have time to get to the dentist and 20% plan to stay single because getting married is such a long process, says the survey by easyMoney.com. They just won't queue.

## #2

Waiting lists have a central place in the experience and perception of health care in the NHS in the United Kingdom, although they are also a feature of publicly funded health systems in other countries. The phenomenon of waiting lists has changed little over the fifty-year history of the NHS despite the high political profile of attempts to ameliorate it. Long waiting lists are clearly a form of rationing and may imply that rationing is a necessary response to an overall disparity between demand and supply in a publicly funded health system that is free at the point of access.

2. Discuss the following characteristics of style with your classmates and teacher. Fill in the table.

Contractions, long words, complex sentences, compound sentences, simple sentences, phrasal verbs, personal/impersonal language, personal pronouns, words of Latin origin

formal	informal

**SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND VOCABULARY**

## PRACTICE 1

Ex. 1. Make the narrative below more formal by using complex and compound sentences instead of the simple ones.

Louis Napoleon was a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. He was exiled to Switzerland after the battle of Waterloo. He took part in a coup against the French king in 1840. The coup failed. Louis Napoleon was jailed for life. He escaped to England six years later. The king abdicated in 1848. Louis Napoleon returned to Paris. He was elected to the first parliament of the Second Republic. Then he was chosen as its first president. In 1852 a plebiscite confirmed him as emperor. Emperor Napoleon III lost the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. He lost the throne and died in exile in England in 1873.

Ex. 2.

- a) Make a less formal narrative choosing appropriate blocks;  
 b) make a more formal narrative using more complex structures to combine the appropriate blocks.

1. [ **From exile and ignominy / from nowhere** ]  
 Louis Napoleon  
 [ **reached the summit of European power / came to power in just four years.** ]
2. For twenty-two years he was  
 [ **president and later emperor of France / one of the world's most benevolent / generous dictators.** ]
3. [ **He made friends with England / his friendship with England ended centuries of conflict.** ]  
 England and France  
 [ **became allies from the Crimean War onwards / have been allies since the Crimean War.** ]
4. [ **It was Louis Napoleon who ordered Haussmann to rebuild Paris / Louis Napoleon had Haussmann rebuild Paris.** ]
5. Louis Napoleon  
 [ **improved healthcare, helped to develop industry, commerce, shipbuilding and railways / encouraged industry, commerce, shipbuilding and railways; under his rule healthcare was improved.** ]
6. The emperor  
 [ **was the patron of arts / loved arts;** ]  
 he encouraged Impressionism by  
 [ **launching / opening** ]  
 the Salon des Refuses.
7. He restructured wine industry; he  
 [ **made French cheeses world famous / promoted French cheeses worldwide.** ]
8. The emperor  
 [ **restored all the joie de vivre (joy of living) lost in the years of Revolution / restored the former glamour of Paris.** ]  
 Gaslit Paris  
 [ **became Europe's capital for pleasure / attracted tourists.** ]
9. His finest period was from 1855 and 1867;  
 [ **in both these years he staged vast national exhibitions / both in 1855 and 1867 he held huge national exhibitions;** ]  
 world leaders  
 [ **came to admire / flocked to Paris to marvel at** ]  
 France's scientific, industrial and artistic advances.
10. In 1856, after the victorious end of the Crimean War,  
 [ **the peace talks were held in Paris / France achieved massive prestige by hosting the peace talks.** ]
11. [ **His biggest mistake was marrying the Spanish countess Eugenie / his decision to marry the Spanish countess Eugenie turned out to be his greatest misfortune** ]
12. [ **She pushed him to / was a leading advocate of** ]  
 the disastrous war with Prussia. It led to his abdication.

**Ex. 3. Read the review and say what the writer thinks of the author.**

This year saw the death of J.G. Ballard, one of the most original and disturbing writers of his generation. I only knew his work through the film of *Empire of the Sun*, about his childhood in a Japanese prison camp in Shanghai. His death prompted me to get hold of his memoirs *Miracles of Life* and an armful of his novels.

The first part of his autobiography deals with the Shanghai life that was already covered in *Empire of the Sun*, but it is charmingly told. Early on, he knew that the world had changed and that his literary tastes and his politics would reflect this. His early novels are variations on the genre of science fiction. Later on he developed a darkly satirical view of the world.

Of the handful of his works which I have read so far I'd particularly recommend a novel called *Concrete Island*. It's a sort of modern Robinson Crusoe about a man whose Jaguar gets a blowout in the front tyre. It skids off the Westway flyover\* coming out of Marylebone in London, and he is stuck on a concrete island compelled to live off potato chips and other discarded snacks thrown out of the windows of the swiftly-passing traffic. Events on the island go from bad to gruesome worse.

It is a fantastic book, for the concrete island is not just an imagined concrete horror, modern Britain itself — hostile, soulless and frightening.

/From *Reader's Digest* August 2009/

**Ex. 4. Read another review and compare it with the one above.**

**Which do you think is meant for publishing? What is the main difference between the two?**

Have you heard of J.G. Ballard? I didn't know much about him either until now. I only saw the film *Empire of the Sun* based on his book. It is about his childhood in a Japanese prison camp in Shanghai. Recently a friend mentioned he is worth reading and I decided to give one of his books a try. I must say I do not regret it.

So far I've read a novel called *Concrete Island*. It's a sort of modern Robinson Crusoe story. A guy driving a Jaguar has a sort of an accident and finds himself on a concrete island right in the centre of London. There's no way he can escape, so he has to live off potato chips and other discarded snacks thrown out of the windows of the passing cars. And it gets from bad to worse.

I heard Ballard started as a sort of science fiction writer, but this one is really much much better than any science fiction. The man did know his job. This concrete island is a real horror — right in the middle of modern Britain. And it is a lot more frightening than the island Robinson Crusoe had to live on.

It's a terrific read, and I'm absolutely sure you'll enjoy it too.

**Ex. 5. Choose the more formal words to complete the review of the book "A History of Diplomacy" by Jeremy Black.**

Jeremy Black, himself 1) \_\_\_\_\_ (no mean/a distinguished) historian of the diplomacy of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, takes a very different approach to the history of conduct of international relations from its 2) \_\_\_\_\_ (origins/beginnings) to the present.

(For starters / to begin with) Black prefers to locate the origins of diplomacy 4) \_\_\_\_\_ (well/long) before the Renaissance, in the medieval era (and even in ancient Greece). Another 5) \_\_\_\_\_ (thing about/distinctive feature of) Black's book is the way the extra-European world is known to have played a more independent role than is generally understood.

In his survey Black demonstrates a/an 6) \_\_\_\_\_ (huge / encyclopedic) knowledge, and brims with thought-provoking insights and 7) \_\_\_\_\_ (remarks/observations). If the book has any weaknesses, these in large part follow from its strengths. Sometimes the 8) \_\_\_\_\_ (deluge / flood) of examples, information and ideas is 9) \_\_\_\_\_ (too much / amounts to overload). But 10) \_\_\_\_\_ (notwithstanding / for all) its faults this is an innovative and remarkably wide-ranging historical survey.

#### USEFUL TIPS FOR REVIEW WRITING:

- remember to mention the title and the author;
- describe the plot and/the main characters *OR* the subject matter, the main ideas;
- explain why you recommend the book.

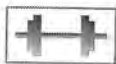
**Ex. 6.** *Make this review less formal by using simple sentences, active voice, less formal words instead of the underlined ones. You may find the list of words below useful.*

In *Juliet, Naked*, Nick Hornby returns to the *High Fidelity*<sup>1</sup> territory of male obsessions and the women who have to put up with them. In the grim northern resort of Goolness, Duncan runs a website about Tucker Crowe, a never-very-famous American singer who disappeared entirely from public view in 1986. (Among other things, the novel is one of the first to explore the effect of the internet on shared obsessions.) But then the tiny world of Crowe worshippers is rocked by the news that an acoustic demo<sup>2</sup> version of his best known album *Juliet*, is about to be released. Duncan duly hails the result as a masterpiece, but his long-suffering girlfriend Annie is more objective — and says so online. As a result she gets an admiring email from Tucker Crowe... Is she really going to find proper love on a damp and windy seafront, when Tucker finally arrives in England?

One thing you have to give Nick Hornby credit for is his ability to steer clear of the predictable path all the time throughout the novel. Hilarious and tender, *Juliet, Naked* will profoundly move the reader. It's Nick Hornby at his brilliant best. (232 words)

**Word list:** describe, to tell a story, long forgotten, irritated, fans, excited, to shake, to praise, to have doubts/to be doubtful, true, to develop... (story, etc) in an unexpected way, touching, funny

**Ex. 7.** *Write your own short review of a book or a story you like as if you are writing*



- a) to a friend recommending a read;*  
*b) to a newspaper / Reader's Digest*

#### USEFUL LANGUAGE:

This book is about/investigates/deals with/examines/takes us back to  
 It is a simple/straightforward/complex/pungent/compelling narrative (that brings smb/smith to life)

A highly readable/exciting/..... book

A formidable/prolific/brilliant ..... writer

The book is a brisk, delightful read...

<sup>1</sup> The first novel by Nick Hornby, published in 1995

<sup>2</sup> a piece of recorded music that a new singer or group sends to a recording company

## SECTION 2 | WRITING AN INFORMAL LETTER

### BETWEEN FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

*Lead-in. Do you think that today's instant communication has killed letter writing? For what purpose(s), in your view, words on paper can be better than an electronic letter or a text message?*

- to exchange information
- to express one's opinion or position on a certain matter
- to share impressions or emotions
- ???

*Read a short excerpt from a letter written a long time ago. Can you imagine writing it as an email? Why?*

To William Wordsworth<sup>1</sup>  
Sent from Grasmere, Monday 1 August  
to Wednesday morning 3 August 1810

O, My William!

It is not in my power to tell thee<sup>2</sup> how I have been affected by this dearest of all letters — it was so unexpected — so new a thing to see the breathing of thy inmost heart upon paper that I was quite overpowered, & now that I sit down to answer thee in the loneliness and depth of that love which unites us...

*Read a piece of advice below. Does it make sense to you?*

It is worthwhile to make time to write to a friend or relative when you are away. While text (sms) and emails are all very well, they can't compare with the thrill of finding a handwritten envelope in one's letter box. Love letters — even a note — are always welcome, especially when least expected. So are those sent at the time of hardship or emotional stress. It is the letters never written that we most regret, seldom those sent. (Elspeth Thompson)

**Ex. 8.** *Read the letters; identify the purpose of each. Rank them according to the degree of formality. What characteristics of a letter make you think so? Which of these, do you think, were sent by email?*

#### LETTER 1

Dear Galina,

4-Aug.-10

Sorry to have missed you on your recent visit to the UK. Various hospital appointments and problems with my travelling made this difficult. Thank you for the excellent book on Russian Art which we have added to our now substantial collection (at least those left after one of our granddaughter's raid for her A level art examinations last year). She has recently spent seven months teaching in India and now four months in Hong Kong, Vietnam, currently in Laos, then a brief visit to Thailand in the company of her boyfriend prior to starting at Manchester University.

<sup>1</sup> a famous British Romantic poet; the letter was written by his wife Mary

<sup>2</sup> thee — an old word meaning 'you' = ты, thy = твой

Your son tells us that in the new year you are due for an operation. In this we wish you an excellent recovery as soon as possible. June is still not fully fit after hers last year.

Nearly forgot, June has reminded me to thank you for the chocolates (she is only having one a day to make them last). This doesn't apply to other chocolates which disappear in a few days.

We look like having a very dry August/September, saves cutting the lawn and the roses and dahlias seem to like the heat.

We hear you are still lecturing at your school in Moscow, are you continuing to take parties to overseas cultural/pleasure visits? The Chinese have now decided to visit London in substantial number and are purchasing many pairs of Clarks shoes (many of these are made in China.) One newspaper was rather amused that they visited Chinese restaurants for their food!! Actually I do not blame them if this is true as they are better than most fast food outlets.

We tend to eat at very local restaurants which are either in walking distance or have adequate parking (a major problem locally as the town centre is being rebuilt to house another supermarket!!)

June has just returned from the cinema after seeing "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", a recent new release.

All the best

Sincerely and with love, Phil and June

## LETTER 2

10/05/2015

Dear Irina,

Do you know that I got married and am living in Galmpton (a lovely small hamlet near Brixham)?

We are house hunting at the moment (not much luck yet).

How has your year been? Do you spend most of your time in Moscow or a little relaxing in the countryside? How is your daughter? Are you a grandmother yet?

Do you still organise student language holidays in Torbay?

Have you heard that Deborah is closing down her Academy?

They have had another bad year. Winter season was low for all of us, but they were hit real hard.

I am not surprised really. When Deborah decided to leave TLC and go solo, Patrick was livid. Said she was stealing their customers. In fact, he is hers! Deborah can't afford expensive advertising. It is sad really.

When are you planning to visit England?

My address is: 6 Manor Court, Galmpton, Nr Brixham, S.Devon. Surname now is Fierett.

Do keep in touch

I hope you are well.

Regards,

Jacqueline, Tony and Ben

## LETTER 3

IATEFL

Darwin College, University of Kent,  
 Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NW United Kingdom  
 Tel: +44 1227 824430  
 2 November 2019

Prof. Elena Orlova  
 MGIMO University  
 Prospect Vernadskogo 76  
 119454 Moscow  
 Russian Federation

Dear Prof. Elena Orlova,

We would like to formally invite you, Prof. Elena Orlova, to participate in the Annual International IATEFL Conference and Exhibition to be held in Manchester, UK from 18th to 21st April 2020.

This will be a major ELT event and will consist of over 300 talks, workshops, and symposiums. There will be four plenary sessions by top ELT professionals. Speakers and participants are expected from over 80 countries.

In addition there will be a major ELT Resources Exhibition with over 50 exhibition stands showing the latest published materials, teaching resources and equipment, computer software and services.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference in Harrogate.

Yours sincerely,

*signature*

Glenda Smart Executive Officer  
 For and on behalf of IATEFL

## LETTER 4

2b Dixon Court,  
 Cottingham,  
 East Yorkshire, HU16  
 Tel: 01482 875740  
 12 December 2008

111 Buckingham Palace Road  
 London SW1W 0DT  
 The Daily Telegraph

Sir,

Burning three tons of domestic waste generates about the same amount of heat as burning one ton of coal. It is criminal that we are dumping this valuable resource into landfill (мусорная свалка).

Modern waste-recovery incinerators (мусоросжигательная печь) such as the one in Sheffield can recover this energy safely to run district heating schemes and generate electricity.

Using waste in this way has the triple advantage of reducing the need for fuel imports, reducing the need for landfill and ensuring that the carbon content of the waste goes into the

atmosphere as carbon dioxide rather than as methane: the powerful greenhouse gas which results when waste matter rots in landfill.

Given a choice between a modern incinerator and a nuclear power station in my neighbourhood I would choose the incinerator every time.

Yours faithfully,

*signature*

Roger Evans,

Real estate agent

**Ex. 9.** *Make two lists of useful expressions: A — for informal and B — for formal letters out of the following. Arrange the words in the order they might be used in a letter.*

Look forward to hearing from you, keep in touch, I am looking forward to, we are happy to be able to, did you know, did I tell you, I regret having to tell you this, thanks for (your letter), your letter was such fun to read, yours sincerely, love, best wishes, best regards, write to me soon, yours faithfully, I am writing to (inform you / ...), this is a brief reminder, I am wondering if, I wonder if you are aware, according to your letter, I am sorry about, please say hello to, we appreciate your (contribution / the time and effort), thank you for your patience and understanding, well, that's all for now, thank you for your letter received 25 January.

List A: Informal	List B: Formal
Thanks (for your letter)	Thank you for your letter received 25 January

#### USEFUL TIPS FOR WRITING AN INFORMAL LETTER

1. The less you know a person, the more formal the letter will be.
2. Use a positive cheerful tone (unless you or your reader is going through sad times). Avoid using words like *don't, haven't, won't, can't, bad, awful, hard, difficult, terrible*.
3. Write about happenings and news, films, books or plays you've seen or read recently, etc.
4. Write about ideas that are important to you, share your opinions, your reaction to current events.
5. Make your letter enjoyable to read, hence: ELABORATE, that is, give more details.
6. Avoid complaining.

**Ex. 10.** Read Letter 1 in ex. 8 again. Does it meet the requirements suggested above?

**Ex. 11.** Fill in the format of an informal letter below with your own content. (If short of ideas make use of the story below to make the letter more interesting)

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Salutation: Dear John,</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Paragraph 1 (indented)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Paragraph 2 (indented) Paragraph 3 (indented)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Paragraph 4 (indented)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Closing <i>signature</i></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Address (if unknown to your addressee) Date of writing</div>
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### Narration: telling a story

My sisters Mary and Suzanne decided to treat themselves to a meal in an expensive restaurant. They had just placed their orders when they became aware of the loud tones of the gentleman at the next table arguing with the waiter. Nothing was good enough for him: the soup was too salty, the bread too dry, the service slow and the tablecloth filthy.

The waiter brought him a steak. The man took a mouthful, put down his knife and fork, and walked off. My sisters were astonished.

"What a rude man," said Suzanne. "And what a waste of good food. I'm taking it back for the dog."

With that she walked over to the table, picked up the steak, wrapped it in a paper napkin and plopped it into her handbag.

Just then, the man returned. He'd only been to the toilet.

**Ex. 12.**

**A.** Write an informal letter (to a friend, parent, relative) using the format and the tips above.



**B.** You may also want to write a letter to express your opinion about a new film, exhibition, a play you have seen recently, etc. If so, use advice on writing a paragraph expressing opinion (see Step 5 Part 1). Explain why you think it is interesting, impressive, etc.