

Writing in Context

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

in this lesson, you will learn about the purpose and audience of each type of writing. To help you become a more effective writer across different kinds of writing, this tutorial will specifically focus on:

1. Academic Writing
2. Professional Writing
3. Personal Writing
4. Formal and Informal Writing
5. Modes of Writing

1. Academic Writing

Consider the audience for each setting and what will be expected. Academic writing is meant for an academic audience, expecting detailed, factual information. Because of these expectations, academic writing uses more elevated, or technical, vocabulary. It often requires a more complex sentence structure and will generally incorporate facts, figures, and research.

2. Professional Writing

Professional writing is meant for use in a business setting. For this reason, while such writing will likely be similar to academic writing, it will also likely use simpler sentence structures, swap complex vocabulary for more conversational words, and may rely on industry jargon.

Think about the difference between a research paper you might write for a class and a sales pitch you might give at work. In the paper, you might refer to personal computing devices, such as laptops, whereas in your sales pitch you might just be able to reference a MacBook and expect that your audience will know what that means.

Both kinds of writing need correct grammar and sentence structures, so no missing commas or sentence fragments here. But because an academic text is meant to present data, it will probably try to remain neutral about the facts, whereas a professional text might not. In these ways, you can see that both academic and professional writing tends to be more formal.

3. Personal Writing

Personal writing is more casual. Think again about the purpose. Consider the difference in the way you'd write a letter to the president or your boss or even a professor versus your mom or your friends.

Personal writing can use slang and can play fast and loose with grammar and sentence structure without a problem. While academic and professional writing probably won't include a lot of emotion and feeling, personal writing can be emotionally driven or may attempt to convey feeling and tone.

Personal writing can even use contractions, which are when two or three words are shoved together to make one shorter word, with an apostrophe representing the letters that got cut, such as when you write "can't" instead of "cannot."



TRY IT

Below are pairs of words and phrases. Each means the same thing but has a different vocabulary, tone, or structure. Which one is formal? Which are casual? The vocabulary, or choice of words, can tell us a lot.

"One hundred dollars" or "A hundred bucks"?

+

"Bucks" is slang, whereas "dollars" is not.

"He has to go to school" or "He's got to get to school"?

+

"He's got to get" uses informal language, and is inappropriate for more formal communication.

"The politician misspoke" or "The politician made a gaff"?

+

The tone of a sentence can also make it formal or informal. "Made a gaffe" is playful, and the "politician misspoke" is neutral. If the writer wanted to emphasize the severity of the error, they might say, "the politician made a grave error in his speech." See how different tones imply different levels of formality and even different meanings?



BIG IDEA

Formal writing isn't focused on the author at all, whereas informal writing may be entirely focused on the author, him- or herself. Always consider the purpose of the piece of writing and who your audience is. That way you can select the appropriate tone, type of language, and word choice.

4. Formal and Informal Writing

What is the big difference, then, between formal and informal? Formal is neutral in its emotional tone. It won't include the author by saying things such as, "I think." It will make use of a more polished and complex vocabulary, as well as sentence structure.

Informal writing is more emotional in tone, can refer to the author, and uses whatever vocabulary, including slang, that it wants.

Formal	Informal
Neutral	Emotional
No "I" or "you"	Author
Complex vocabulary and structure	Casual vocabulary

Formal and informal writing are used alongside each other all the time. Just think about the last time you listened to the news. You certainly heard both formal and informal kinds of writing mixed together.

5. Modes of Writing

Modes of writing can also be called modes of discourse. It refers to the different types of writing, which have different purposes. This can include:

- Descriptive mode
- Narrative mode
- Informative mode
- Argumentative mode

The story of Little Red Riding Hood will help illustrate the specifics of each mode.

- What if you wanted to tell the whole story? That would be **narrative mode**.
- While telling the story, using the narrative mode, you described the wolf. What mode would that be? **Descriptive mode**.
- Details about Little Red Riding Hood's cloak are explained and you outline facts that you researched about cloaks in literature. What mode? **Informative mode**.
- What if you want to convince your readers that the true hero of the story is Red? Then you will need to use the **argumentative mode**. When you are in the argumentative mode, it's like you're in a debate, presenting

the argument from your side and supporting your claims with reasoning, logical explanations, and even researched information.

Whether your writing is formal or informal, whether you're using academic, professional, or personal types of writing, you will likely use some, or even all, four modes. So what might writing about Little Red look like?



TRY IT

Identify the mode of each sentence below.

"Little Red Riding Hood is a story about a girl wearing a red cloak who is pursued by a wolf."

+

This is descriptive. It describes the story without any personal opinions or experiences.

"Little Red Riding Hood is really too scary for kids because the wolf eats the grandmother."

+

This is in the argumentative mode because it states an opinion and provides a supporting detail.

"I used to be so scared of the wolf when my mother read Little Red Riding Hood."

+

This sentence is in the narrative mode. It does not make the argument that the story is too scary for all children, only describes a personal experience.



BIG IDEA

These types and modes can work together in any piece of writing depending, again, on the context and purpose of that text.



TERMS TO KNOW

Modes

Different types of writing which have different purposes, including the descriptive mode, narrative mode, informative mode, and argumentative mode.

Narrative Mode

Writing that is driven by a story.

Descriptive Mode

Writing that provides details concerning a specific person, place, or thing.

Informative Mode

Writing designed to inform, describe, or explain.

Argumentative Mode

Takes a clear position on a debatable question and backs up claims with evidence and reasoning



SUMMARY

This tutorial explained different types of writing; **academic, professional, and personal**. Academic writing will incorporate facts, figures, and research. Professional writing may involve industry jargon such as "MacBook". Differences in **formal and informal** writing include references made to the author; informal writing may include "I" and "my." Four **modes** of writing—narrative, informative, descriptive, and argumentative—were demonstrated through Little Red Riding Hood.

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