

# 6 It's Just a Formality



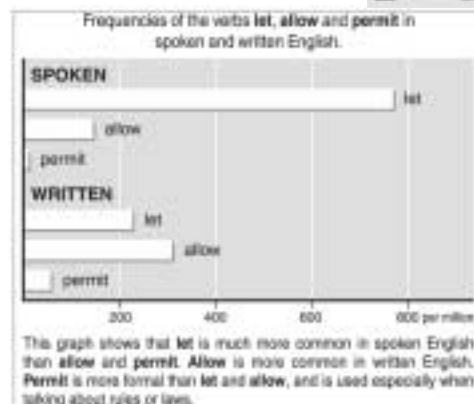
## Example

A father says to his daughter:

"Yes, I will permit you to go to see the movie."

Although this sentence is not incorrect, the word **permit** is quite formal and wouldn't normally be used in this context.

A native English speaker would say **let** instead.



The graphs throughout the **Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English** tell you which words are normally spoken and which are normally written. In addition:

- Any word that is formal or informal is clearly labelled.
- "Word focus" boxes show you formal and informal ways of expressing yourself.

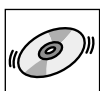
**A.** Read the following dialogue. Although there are no grammatical mistakes, it sounds a bit too formal in places. Underline the words that you think are too formal for a conversation between friends. The first one has been done for you.

- Tom: Wow! Inspect that car over there. It looks great.
- Peter: You're right. It's beautiful. It's just the type of car I require.
- Tom: So what have you been up to?
- Peter: Well, I quit my job. I detested my boss.
- Tom: Won't you miss work somewhat, though?
- Peter: Well, currently I'm searching for a new job. I think I'll be back in work soon.
- Tom: What sort of thing are you searching for?
- Peter: Anything that pays lots of money! I've got an interview next week. I've purchased a new suit.
- Tom: I can't imagine you in a suit!
- Peter: So what are we going to do tonight? I've heard there's this new establishment in town.
- Tom: Yeah. "Long Island", I think it's called.
- Peter: I'll need a bit of time to prepare. They won't allow you in with jeans on.
- Tom: All right then. I'll meet you back here about 10.

### How many words did you find?

- 1–2 You're far too formal. You sound like the Queen!
- 3–5 Too formal. Remember you're speaking English not writing a letter.
- 6–8 You're not too formal but be careful – you still make one or two mistakes.
- 9–10 Excellent! You're very clear about the difference between formal and informal English.

**B.** Now rewrite the dialogue, this time using the correct level of language for this context. For example, **look at** is a more natural way of saying **inspect** here. Use the notes in the dictionary which tell you about spoken and written language.



If a word doesn't seem quite right for your situation, the complete new edition of the **Longman Language Activator** on the CD-ROM gives alternative ways of saying what you mean.

#### PHOTOCOPIABLE

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary  
English Teacher's Resource Pack  
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# Teacher's Notes

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**Time:** 15 minutes

**Aims:**

■ To make students aware of different levels of language (register).

1. Ask the students to focus on the example at the start of the worksheet. Point out that the sentence is not incorrect but sounds rather formal for the context.
2. Divide the students into pairs and ask them to read the dialogue. Tell them that they receive one mark for each word they find, but if they choose a word that is being correctly used they lose a point.
3. Students can find out how formal they are by adding up their total and looking at the key in the box.
4. Now tell the class to rewrite the dialogue to make it less formal. They can use their dictionary to help them.

**Answers:**

**A.** There are 10 words/phrases in all; **search** is repeated.

inspect; require; detested; somewhat; currently; searching for;  
purchased; establishment; prepare; allow in

**B.** inspect ♦ look at; require ♦ need; detested ♦ hated;  
somewhat ♦ a bit; currently ♦ at the moment, just now;  
searching for ♦ looking for (twice); purchased ♦ bought;  
establishment ♦ place; prepare ♦ get ready; allow in ♦ let in