

Register

A register is a variety of language that is associated with a particular situation of use.

Formal Register

We use formal language in situations that are serious or that involve people we don't know well. We usually use formal language when we write, but there are some situations where we use it in speech.

We can use formal language when:

- we are giving a speech or meeting someone for the first time
- writing formal letters
- writing other non-fiction genres, such as instructions, reports or essays.

Informal Register

We use informal language in situations that are more relaxed and involve people we know well. It is more common when we speak, but with online communication, we are starting to use it more often in our writing. We use informal language when:

- talking to someone we know
- writing letters, emails or messages to friends and close relatives.

words

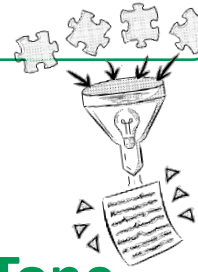
Words words words words.

Accent

Accent is the way people pronounce words. People from different parts of the country often have different accents. We all have an accent or idiolect. Our voices, however, do change depending on who we are speaking to and depending on the context of that conversation.

Thinking points:

- What reactions do people give to different regional accents – e.g. Somerset, Scouse, Cockney, Birmingham, Ulster, Yorkshire?
- Which accents sound more important and which sound less? Why do you think this is?



KS3 Spine Register & Tone

Dialect

These are words or phrases that you only tend to hear in a particular geographical area, so if you are from Cornwall, you might hear someone from Birmingham or Scotland using different words and grammar from you. For example, the words 'bap', 'cob' and 'bun' are synonyms for 'bread roll' in different parts of the country.

Thinking points:

- Is someone's language part of their personality?
- Does it help tell the story of who they are?

Standard English

Standard English is a clear style of English that can be understood by a wide audience. It may sometimes be called 'posh', 'formal' or even 'the Queen's English'. The word 'Standard' refers to the use of standard vocabulary and grammar with no slang or informal styles. For example, where you might say to a friend, "We're gonna go up town", to turn this into Standard English, you would say: "We're going to go to town".

Thinking points:

- Should we all be taught to speak in a more standardised way?
- Do you think that the rules of Standard English are as important now that we all communicate more often using computers?

Key Vocabulary

Audience: the person or people reading or hearing the text

Context: The context of a text is the place and time in which it was written, who it was written by, and where it was published.

Genre: the kind of text you have in front of you (advert, speech, song)

Idiolect: your own individual way of speaking

Received Pronunciation (RP): a prestige form of English pronunciation

Slang: a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing

Colloquial: used in ordinary or familiar conversation; not formal or literary; everyday language

Tone

Tone in writing is not really any different than the tone of your voice. You know that sometimes it is not "what" you say, but "how" you say it. It is the same with writing. Every word you use, your sentence structure, and the imagery you use will show your tone. The definition of "tone" is the way the author expresses their attitude through their writing.

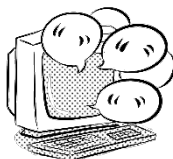
Thinking points:

- Do you think understanding a writer's tone is important in understanding the meaning of a text?
- What information about context could help you understand the use of tone in a text? For example, the tone of anger in a piece of journalism.

Using a formal register	Using an informal register
<p><u>Vocabulary</u> Use technical words specific to the topic you are writing about. Words like “nice” and “a lot” have a vague meaning. Try to think of more descriptive words, for example, “delicious” or “endless”. Avoid slang or dialect words or words you would use when speaking, such as “cool” or “you know”. Try providing “signposts” to help your reader find their way through your writing. Words and phrases such as “in addition”, “nevertheless”, “on the other hand”, “by contrast”, “although” and “alternatively” are always helpful. Use some polite modal verbs, e.g. “May we look...?” or “Might you be so kind as to...”.</p> <p><u>Grammar</u> It is important to choose a style and voice that fits in with the text-type or genre, the purpose and the audience of the task, e.g. a report would be third person. No contractions – full, expanded versions of the words, e.g. <i>should not instead of shouldn't</i>. Try using semicolons in place of a full stop to link two sentences that share the same topic.</p>	<p><u>Vocabulary</u> You can use colloquialisms or slang, e.g. “Don’t bite my head off!”, “well chuffed” or “skiving off”. Address the reader directly, e.g. “You’ll be amazed...” It is okay sometimes to use the kind of words that are more usual in speech than writing, e.g. “Come on, it’s time we were off!” or “Haven’t you got something better to be up to?”.</p> <p><u>Grammar</u> Contractions sound more natural in certain types of writing, for example, a talk to fellow students, e.g. “It is good to know that we’re all going to work together on this.” Deliberate use of dashes, e.g. “You won’t believe what happened – I dropped the plate!” Use of ellipsis to build tension or demonstrate hesitation e.g. “I...I don’t think I can....do it...” You can also write in an accent or include a dialect, but remember to use apostrophes for omissions, e.g. “I ain’t got nuffing” or “Ye’ll nae get far lassie” or “And ‘ow are you gonna get that ‘ome?”</p>

Using different registers

Look at the examples below and decide on the register you would use for each conversation:



- **BBC news report**
- **job interview**
- **asking for a refund at a shop**
- **discussion with friends about your weekend**
- **teacher in class**
- **meeting with a bank manager**
- **asking your parents for more pocket money**

Then, have a go at writing some of the different texts or conversations. Use the guidelines above to help you find the correct register.

Activities

What Register?

Look at the examples below. Copy them into a table and place them into an informal or formal column:

1. Give us your pen, Gaz.
2. May I have a pound?
3. Go down the ginnet.
4. Yesterday we go...
5. We was...
6. We were...
7. Mark and me’ve been out.
8. I ain't got nothing for you.
9. Excuse me, but do you have a pen I could possibly borrow, please?
10. Can I have a pen please Sir?

Accent and Dialect

Look at the song below. Can you work out:

- What accent it is being sung in?
- What dialect words have been used?
- Could you translate it into Standard English?
- What impact would that have on the effect of the song?



Oh, yee cannae shove yer granny aff a bus,
Oh, yee cannae shove yer granny aff a bus,
Oh yee cannae shove yer granny,
For she's yer mammy's mammy,
Oh yee cannae shove yer granny aff a bus!



Exploring Tone

The Road Not Taken (By Robert Frost)

In the last stanza of his poem *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost gives us an insight into the effect of tone:

**“I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.”**

Frost tells us about his past with a “sigh” that gives the above lines an unhappy tone. This tone leads us into thinking that the speaker in the poem had to make a difficult choice.

Explore what tones the following extracts have.

The Tell-Tale Heart (By Edgar Allen Poe)

“It was A LOW, DULL, QUICK SOUND – MUCH SUCH A SOUND AS A WATCH MAKES WHEN ENVELOPED IN COTTON. I gasped for breath, and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly, more vehemently but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why WOULD they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men, but the noise steadily increased. O God! What COULD I do?”

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

There was a steaming mist in all the hollows, and it had roamed in its forlornness up the hill, like an evil spirit, seeking rest and finding none. A clammy and intensely cold mist, it made its slow way through the air in ripples that visibly followed and overspread one another, as the waves of an unwholesome sea might do. It was dense enough to shut out everything from the light of the coach-lamps but these its own workings, and a few yards of road; and the reek of the labouring horses steamed into it, as if they had made it all.