



Sixth Grade

ELA

ACTIVITY
3.6

Grade 6 ELA Summer Task 1

The Formality of It All: Style and Tone

Learning Strategies

- Graphic Organizer
- Substituting/Replacing
- Self-Editing/Peer Editing
- Quickwrite

VOCABULARY

LITERARY

Tone is the attitude that a writer or speaker displays toward his or her subject.

Formal style is a style of writing or speaking that is appropriate for formal communication, such as in academics or business.

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Analyze the purpose of formal style and tone.
- Write letters using both formal and informal tone.

Preview

In this activity, you will learn about tone and practice using a formal style versus an informal style of writing.

Identifying Tone

1. Authors of argumentative texts use **tone** as a way of convincing you, the reader or listener, to adopt their viewpoint, or agree with their claim. Listen to your teacher read a line of dialogue and choose a word from the Tone Word Bank to describe the attitude, or tone.

Tone Word Bank

angry	sad	sentimental
sharp	cold	upset
urgent	complimentary	condescending
bored	poignant	sympathetic
afraid	happy	confused
apologetic	childish	humorous
joyful	calm	mocking
sarcastic	sweet	bitter
tired	shocked	proud
giddy	serious	dramatic

2. When you are writing an argumentative text, you need to select a tone that is appropriate for your audience. Explain why this statement makes sense.

3. Think about the audience and purpose for each of the situations in the graphic organizer. Which style of writing would be most appropriate for each situation—**formal style** or informal style?

Audience/Purpose	Appropriate Style
You are writing an essay for a school exam.	
You are writing a caption for a picture you are posting on social media.	
You are writing a letter to your principal to convince him or her to fund a new sports team.	

Formal Style Versus Informal Style

4. Look at the following examples of formal style and informal style. What are the differences you notice? Try to write your own definitions of *formal style* and *informal style* and check them against a dictionary or glossary. Then complete the chart by translating each sentence into its opposite style.

Formal Style:

Informal Style:

Formal	Informal
Please refrain from talking.	Hey, quit talking.
Will you be attending the dance this evening?	Are you gonna go to the dance later?
Hello. How are you today?	
	Too much homework stinks.
	That lunch made me gag.
He launched his bicycle off the ramp and flew through the air.	

LANGUAGE & WRITER'S CRAFT: Formal Style

It is important to maintain consistency in style and tone so readers can follow your ideas. Readers will be confused if your writing jumps back and forth between formal and informal style.

Consistent Formal Style: *You must adhere to the guidelines. Your cooperation will be noted and appreciated.*

Inconsistent Formal Style: *You must adhere to the guidelines. It would be totally awesome if you'd do that.*

Consistent Informal Style: *The speaker says we should stop using plastic bags. She gave some good reasons for this.*

Inconsistent Informal Style: *The speaker suggests discontinuing the use of plastic bags. Her reasons were totally bogus.*

Use the following list of characteristics of formal style to keep your writing style consistently formal.

Formal Style

DO:

- **Adhere to the rules of proper grammar and mechanics.**
- **Use precise, specific diction:** Use diction that is specific to the topic and precise for the audience.
Example: During the debate, the opponent provided several pieces of **evidence** to support her **claim** and refute her opponent's **argument**. (The words *evidence*, *claim*, *refute*, and *argument* are specific words used when writing about argumentative tasks.)
- **Establish your tone and utilize it throughout your writing.**

DO NOT:

- **Do not use contractions.** They indicate an informal style.
Example: Don't be late.
- **Do not use slang words.** They indicate an informal style.
Example: During the debate, the opponent was off the wall and said totally bogus things.
- **Avoid non sequiturs.** Non sequiturs are sentences that do not flow with the ideas being communicated by the rest of the paragraph.
Example: Too much homework puts extra stress on students. It impacts them in all aspects of life. **I like watching television.** The stress will counteract any benefits gained from doing the homework.
- **Avoid using texting and social media shorthand.**
Example: Id luv 2 go 2 the game. LOL!

PRACTICE In your Reader/Writer Notebook, rewrite the following paragraph to be consistent in formal style and tone.

Last month, this crazy guest speaker came to school. She presented several ideas for ways we could save water at home and at school. To be honest, I thought her ideas were way off the wall, and I didn't think they would fly, anyway. But she asked us to implement at least two of her suggestions for one month, to journal about what we were doing, and then to ping her. My family okayed my proposal, so for one month we all took shorter showers, and we only ran the dishwasher and washing machine when they were full. We also cut the water when brushing our teeth. My dad recorded the water meter reading at the beginning and the end of the month and compared them to the previous month. The results blew me away! We saved tons of water. I dropped her a note, and she got right back to me. Now I'm telling all of my friends to check out her website and get on her water-saving wagon.

Working from the Text

5. Use the graphic organizer to help you analyze the tone and style of the homework article listed below.

Purpose	Examples of Formal Style

Excerpt from "How Much Homework Do American Kids Do?" by Julia Ryan

This article was originally published in *The Atlantic* on September 19, 2013

Math classes have homework the most frequently.

The Metlife study found that 70 percent of students in grades three to 12 had at least one homework assignment in math. Sixty-two percent had at least one homework assignment in a language arts class (English, reading, spelling, or creative writing courses) and 42 percent had at least one in a science class. Regardless of how much homework kids are actually doing every night, most parents and teachers are happy with the way things are: 60 percent of parents think that their children have the "right amount of homework," and 73 percent of teachers think their school assigns the right amount of homework. Students, however, are not necessarily on board: 38 percent of students in grades seven through 12 and 28 percent of students in grades three through six report being "very often/often" stressed out by their homework.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/09/how-much-homework-do-american-kids-do/279805/>

6. Is the tone of the homework article appropriate for the audience and purpose? Why?

Check Your Understanding

Quickwrite: Why is it important to use a formal style and tone in argumentative writing? What happens to your argument when you don't maintain a consistent formal style and tone? Use the My Notes section to jot down your thoughts.

Argumentative Writing Prompt

You are trying to convince your principal to change a school rule or policy (e.g., cell phone usage, school starting time). Write two letters to experiment with tone and formal style. For Letter 1, write a short letter to your principal using informal style and a friendly tone. For Letter 2, transform your first letter to use formal style and a businesslike tone. Be sure to:

- State a clear claim and support it with clear reasons and relevant evidence using reliable and credible sources.
- Pay attention to style and tone.
- Provide a concluding statement that wraps up your argument.

Be prepared to share both letters with your peers.



INDEPENDENT READING LINK

Read and Connect

Look for examples of formal and informal style used in your independent reading. In what context is each style used? Who is the speaker? Who is the audience? What is the subject under discussion? Record some examples of tone in your Reader/Writer Notebook and log your responses to the questions for each.