

CHAPTER 19

Usage Glossary

A usage glossary presents the customary manner of using particular words and phrases. “Customary manner,” however, is not as firm in practice as the term implies. Usage standards change. If you think a word’s usage might differ from what you read here, consult a dictionary published more recently than the current edition of this handbook.

The meaning of *informal* or *colloquial* in the definition of a word or phrase is that it’s found in everyday or conversational speech, but it needs to be avoided in ACADEMIC WRITING. Another term, *nonstandard*, indicates that the word or phrase, although widely understood in speech and dialect writing, isn’t suitable in standard spoken or written English.

a, an Use *a* before words that begin with a consonant (*a dog*, *a grade*, *a hole*) or a consonant sound (*a one-day sale*, *a European*). Use *an* before words or acronyms that begin with a vowel sound or a silent *h* (*an owl*; *an hour*; *an MRI*, because the *M* is sounded *em*). American English uses *a*, not *an*, before words starting with a pronounced *h*: *a* (not *an*) *historical event*.

accept, except The verb *accept* means “agree to; receive.” As a preposition, *except* means “leaving out.” As a verb, *except* means “exclude; leave out.”

- The workers wanted to **accept** [verb] management’s offer **except** [preposition] for one detail: They wanted the limit on overtime **excepted** [verb] from the contract.

advice, advise *Advice*, a noun, means “recommendation.” *Advise*, a verb, means “recommend; give advice.”

- I **advise** [verb] you to follow your car mechanic’s **advice** [noun].

affect, effect As a verb, *affect* means “cause a change in; influence.” (*Affect* is a noun in psychology.) As a noun, *effect* means “result or conclusion”; as a verb, *effect* means “bring about.”

- Loud music **affects** people’s hearing for life, so some bands have **effected** changes to lower the volume. Many fans, however, don’t care about the harmful **effects** of high-decibel levels.

aggravate, irritate *Aggravate* is used colloquially to mean “irritate.” In academic writing, use *aggravate* only to mean “intensify; make worse.” Use *irritate* to mean “annoy; make impatient.”

- The coach was **irritated** by reduced time for practice, which **aggravated** the team’s difficulties with concentration.

ain’t *Ain’t* is a nonstandard contraction. Use *am not*, *is not*, or *are not* for standard spoken and written English.

all ready, already *All ready* means “completely prepared.” *Already* means “before; by this time.”

- The team was **all ready** to play, but the coach was **already** in a bad mood.

all right *All right* is always written as two words, never one (never *alright*).

all together, altogether *All together* means “in a group; in unison.” *Altogether* means “entirely; thoroughly.”

- The twelve jurors told the judge that it was **altogether** absurd for them to stay **all together** in a single hotel room.

allude, elude *Allude* means “refer to indirectly.” *Elude* means “escape notice.”

- The detectives **alluded** to budget cuts by saying that conditions beyond their control allowed the suspect to **elude** them.

allusion, illusion An *allusion* is an indirect reference to something. An *illusion* is a false impression or idea.

- The couple’s casual **allusions** to European tourist sites created the **illusion** that they had visited them.

a lot *A lot* is informal for *a great deal* or *a great many*. Avoid using it in academic writing. If you must use it, write it as two words (never *alot*).

among, amongst, between Use *among* for three or more items. Use *between* for two items. American English prefers *among* to *amongst*.

- My three housemates discussed **among** [not *between* or *amongst*] themselves the choice **between** staying in college and getting full-time jobs.

amoral, immoral *Amoral* means “neither moral (conforming to standards of rightness) nor immoral (the opposite of *moral*).” *Amoral* also means “without any sense of what’s moral or immoral.” *Immoral* means “morally wrong.”

- Although many people consider birth control an **amoral** issue, some religions consider it **immoral**.

amount, number Use *amount* for noncountable things (wealth, work, happiness). Use *number* for countable items.

- The **amount** of rice to cook depends on the **number** of guests.

an See *a, an*.

and/or This term is appropriate in business and legal writing when either or both of the two items can apply: *Sending messages is quicker by e-mail and/or fax*. In the humanities, writers usually express the alternatives in words: *Sending messages is quicker by e-mail, fax, or both*.

anymore Use *anymore* with the meaning “now, any longer” only in negations or questions. In positive statements, instead of *anymore*, use an adverb such as *now*.

- No one wants to live without air conditioning **anymore**. Summers are so hot **now** [not *anymore*] that more people than ever suffer from heatstroke.

anyone, any one *Anyone* is a singular indefinite pronoun meaning “any person at all.” *Any one* (two words), an adjective that modifies a pronoun, means “a member of a group.”

- **Anyone** could test-drive **any one** of the display vehicles.

anyplace *Anyplace* is informal. Use *any place* or *anywhere* instead.

anyways, anywheres *Anyways* and *anywheres* are nonstandard for *anyway* and *anywhere*.

as, as if, as though, like Use *as*, *as if*, or *as though*, but not *like*, when the words coming after include a verb.

- This hamburger tastes good, **as** [not *like*] a hamburger should. It tastes **as if** [or *as though*, not *like*] it were barbequed over charcoal, not gas.

Both *as* and *like* can function as prepositions in comparisons. However, use *as* to indicate equivalence between two nouns or pronouns, and use *like* to indicate similarity but not equivalence.

- My friend Roger served **as** [not *like*] mediator in a dispute about my neighbor’s tree that dripped sap on my driveway **like** [not *as*] a leaky water faucet.

assure, ensure, insure *Assure* means “promise; convince.” *Ensure* and *insure* both mean “make certain or secure,” but *insure* is reserved for financial or legal matters.

- The insurance agent **assured** me that he could **insure** my car, but only I could **ensure** that I would drive safely.

as to *As to* is nonstandard for *about*.

awful, awfully *Awful* is an adjective meaning “inspiring awe” and “creating fear.” *Awfully* is an adverb meaning “in a way to inspire awe” and “terrifying.” Only colloquially are *awful* and *awfully* used to mean “very” or “extremely.”

- I was **extremely** [not *awfully*] tired yesterday.

a while, awhile As two words, *a while* (an article and a noun) can function as a subject or object. As one word, *awhile* is an adverb. In a prepositional phrase, the correct form is *for a while*, *in a while*, or *after a while*.

- It took **a while** [article and noun] to drive to the zoo, where we saw the seals bask **awhile** [adverb modifying verb *bask*] in the sun after romping **for a while** [prepositional phrase] in the water.

bad, badly *Bad* is an adjective only after linking verbs (*look, feel, smell, taste, sound*; these verbs can function as either linking verbs or action verbs depending on the context). *Badly* is an adverb; it's nonstandard after linking verbs.

- Farmers feel **bad** [*feel* is a linking verb, so *bad* is the adjective] because a **bad** [adjective] drought is **badly** [adverb] damaging their crops.

been, being *Been* and *being* cannot stand alone as main verbs. They work only with auxiliary verbs.

- You **are being** [not *being*] honest to admit that you **have been** [not *been*] tempted to eat the whole pie.

being as, being that *Being as* and *being that* are nonstandard for *because* or *since*.

- We had to forfeit the game **because** [not *being as* or *being that*] our goalie was badly injured.

beside, besides As prepositions, *beside* means “next to, by the side of,” and *besides* means “other than, in addition to.” As an adverb, *besides* means “also, moreover.”

- She stood **beside** the new car, insisting that she would drive. No one **besides** her had a driver's license. **Besides**, she owned the car.

better, had better *Better* is informal for *had better*.

- We **had better** [not *better* alone] be careful of the ice.

between See *among, amongst, between*.

bring, take *Bring* indicates movement from a distant place to a near place. *Take* indicates movement from a near to a distant place.

- If you **bring** over sandwiches, we'll have time to **take** [not *bring*] the dog to the vet.

can, may *Can* signifies ability or capacity. *May* requests or grants permission. In negative expressions, *can* is acceptable for *may*.

- When you **can** [not *may*] get here on time, you **may** [not *can*] be excused early. However, if you are not on time, you **cannot** [or *may not*] expect privileges.

capitol, capital *Capitol* means “a building in which legislators meet.” *Capital* means a city (Denver, the *capital* of Colorado), wealth, or “most important” (a *capital* offense).

- If the governor can find enough **capital**, the state legislature will agree to build a new **capital** for our state.

censor, censure The verb *censor* means “delete objectionable material; judge.” The verb *censure* means “condemn or reprimand officially.”

- The town council **censured** the mayor for trying to **censor** a report.

cite, site The verb *cite* means “quote by way of example, authority, or proof.” The noun *site* means “a particular place or location.”

- The private investigator **cited** evidence from the crime **site** and the defendant’s Web **site**.

complement, compliment As a noun, *complement* means “something that goes well with or completes.” As a noun, *compliment* means “praise, flattery.” As a verb, *complement* means “brings to perfection; goes well with, completes.” As a verb, *compliment* means “praise, flatter.”

- The dean’s **compliment** was a perfect **complement** to the thrill of my graduating. My parents felt proud when she **complimented** me publicly, an honor that **complemented** their joy.

comprise, include See *include, comprise*.

continual(ly), continuous(ly) *Continual* means “occurring repeatedly.” *Continuous* means “going on without interruption.”

- Larry needed intravenous fluids **continuously** for days, so the nurses **continually** monitored him.

criteria, criterion A *criterion* is “a standard of judgment.” *Criteria* is the plural of *criterion*.

- A sense of history is an important **criterion** for judging political candidates, but voters must consider other **criteria** as well.

data *Data* is the plural of *datum*, a word rarely used today. Informally, *data* is used as a singular noun that takes a singular verb. In academic or professional writing, *data* is considered plural and takes a plural verb (although this usage is currently viewed as overly formal by some).

- The **data** suggest [not *suggests*] some people are addicted to e-mail.

different from, different than In academic and professional writing, use *different from* even though *different than* is common in informal speech.

- Please advise us if your research yields data **different from** past results.

disinterested, uninterested The preferred use of *disinterested* means “impartial, unbiased.” Colloquially, *disinterested* can mean “not interested, indifferent,” but in more formal contexts, *uninterested* is preferred for “not interested, indifferent.”

- Jurors need to be **disinterested** in hearing evidence, but never **uninterested**.

effect See *affect*, *effect*.

elicit, illicit The verb *elicit* means “draw forth or bring out.” The adjective *illicit* means “illegal.”

- The senator’s **illicit** conduct **elicited** a mass outcry from her constituents.

elude See *allude*, *elude*.

emigrate (from), immigrate (to) *Emigrate* means “leave one country to live in another.” *Immigrate* means “enter a country to live there.”

- My great-grandmother **emigrated** from Kiev, Russia, to London, England, in 1890. Then, she **immigrated** to Toronto, Canada, in 1892.

ensure See *assure*, *ensure*, *insure*.

enthused *Enthused* is nonstandard for *enthusiastic*.

- Adam was **enthusiastic** [not *enthused*] about the college he chose.

etc. *Etc.* is the abbreviation for the Latin *et cetera*, meaning “and the rest.” For writing in the humanities, avoid using *etc.* Acceptable substitutes are *and the like*, *and so on*, or *and so forth*.

everyday, every day The adjective *everyday* means “daily.” *Every day* (two words) is an adjective with a noun that can function as a subject or an object.

- Being late for work has become an **everyday** [adjective] occurrence for me. **Every day** [subject] brings me closer to being fired. I worry about it **every day** [object].

everyone, every one *Everyone* is a singular, indefinite pronoun. *Every one* (two words) is an adjective and a pronoun, meaning “each member in a group.”

- **Everyone** enjoyed **every one** of the comedy skits.

except See *accept*, *except*.

explicit, implicit *Explicit* means “directly stated or expressed.” *Implicit* means “implied, suggested.”

- The warning on cigarette packs is **explicit**: “Smoking is dangerous to health.” The **implicit** message is, “Don’t smoke.”

farther, further Although many writers reserve *farther* for geographical distances and *further* for all other cases, current usage treats them as interchangeable.

fewer, less Use *fewer* for anything that can be counted (that is, with count nouns): *fewer* dollars, *fewer* fleas, *fewer* haircuts. Use *less* with collective (or other noncount nouns): *less* money, *less* scratching, *less* hair.

former, latter When two items are referred to, *former* signifies the first item and *latter* signifies the second item. Never use *former* and *latter* when referring to more than two items.

- Brazil and Ecuador are South American countries. Portuguese is the official language in the **former**, Spanish in the **latter**.

go, say All forms of *go* are nonstandard when used in place of all forms of *say*.

- While stepping on my hand, Frank **says** [not *goes*], “Your hand is in my way.”

good, well *Good* is an adjective. As an adverb, *good* is nonstandard. Instead, use *well*.

- **Good** [adjective] maintenance helps cars run **well** [adverb; not *good*].

got, have *Got* is nonstandard for *have*.

- What do we **have** [not *got*] for supper?

have, of Use *have*, not *of*, after such verbs as *could*, *should*, *would*, *might*, and *must*.

- You **should have** [not *should of*] called first.

he/she, s/he, his/her When using gender-neutral language, write out *he* or *she* or *his* or *her* instead of using and/or constructions. To be more concise, switch to plural pronouns and antecedents. (For more about gender-neutral language, see 20g.)

- **Everyone** bowed **his or her** head. [**Everyone** bowed **his** head is considered sexist language if women were present when the heads were bowed.]
- The **people** bowed **their** heads.

hopefully *Hopefully* is an adverb meaning “with hope, in a hopeful manner,” so as an adverb, it can modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. However, *hopefully* is nonstandard as a sentence modifier meaning “we hope”; therefore, in academic writing, avoid this usage.

- They waited **hopefully** [adverb] for the crippled airplane to land. **We hope** [not *Hopefully*] it will land safely.

humanity, humankind, humans, mankind To use gender-neutral language, choose *humanity*, *humankind*, or *humans* instead of *mankind*.

- Some think that the computer has helped **humanity** more than any other twentieth-century invention.

i.e. This abbreviation refers to the Latin term *id est*. In academic writing, use the English translation, *that is*.

if, whether At the start of a noun clause that expresses speculation or unknown conditions, you can use either *if* or *whether*. However, in such conditional clauses use only *whether* (or *whether or not*) when alternatives are expressed or implied. In a conditional clause that does not express or imply alternatives, use only *if*.

- **If** [not *whether*] you promise not to step on my feet, I might dance with you. Still, I'm not sure **if** [or *whether*] I want to dance with you. Once I decide, I'll dance with you **whether** [not *if*] I like the music or **whether** [not *if*] the next song is fast or slow.

immigrate See *emigrate, immigrate*.

imply, infer *Imply* means “hint at or suggest.” *Infer* means “draw a conclusion.” A writer or speaker *implies*; a reader or listener *infers*.

- When the governor **implied** that she wouldn't seek reelection, reporters **inferred** that she was planning to run for vice president.

include, comprise The verb *include* means “contain or regard as part of a whole.” The verb *comprise* means “consist of or be composed of.”

in regard to, with regard to, as regards Use *about, concerning, and for* in place of these wordy phrases. Also, avoid the nonstandard *as regards to*.

- **Concerning** [not *in regard to, with regard to, as regards, or regarding*] your question, we can now confirm that your payment was received.

irregardless *Irregardless* is nonstandard for *regardless*.

is when, is where Never use these constructions when you define something. Instead, use active verbs.

- Defensive driving **involves staying** [not *is when you stay*] alert.

its, it's *Its* is a personal pronoun in the possessive case. *It's* is a contraction of *it is*.

- The dog buried **its** bone today. **It's** hot today, which makes the dog restless.

kind, sort Combine *kind* and *sort* with *this* or *that* when referring to singular nouns. Combine *kinds* and *sorts* with *these* or *those* when referring to plural nouns. Also, never use *a* or *an* after *kind of* or *sort of*.

- To stay cool, drink **these kinds** of fluids [not *this kind*] for **this sort of** day [not *this sort of a*].

kind of, sort of These phrases are colloquial adverbs. In academic writing, use *somewhat*.

- The campers were **somewhat** [not *kind of*] dehydrated after the hike.

lay, lie The verb *lay* (**lay**, *laid*, *laid*, *laying*) means “place or put something, usually on something else” and needs a direct object. The verb *lie* (**lie**, *lay*, *lain*, *lying*), meaning “recline,” doesn’t need a direct object. Substituting *lay* for *lie*, or the opposite, is nonstandard.

- **Lay** [not *lie*] down the blanket [direct object], and then place the baby to **lie** [not *lay*] in the shade.

like See *as*, *as if*, *as though*, *like*.

lots, lots of, a lot of These are colloquial constructions. Instead, use *many*, *much*, or *a great deal*.

mankind See *humanity*, *humankind*, *humans*, *mankind*.

maybe, may be *Maybe* is an adverb; *may be* (two words) is a verb phrase.

- **Maybe** [adverb] we can win, but our team **may be** [verb phrase] too tired.

may of, might of *May of* and *might of* are nonstandard for *may have* and *might have*.

media *Media* is the plural of *medium*, yet colloquial usage now pairs it with a singular verb: *The media saturates us with information about every fire*.

must of *Must of* is nonstandard for *must have*.

nowheres *Nowheres* is nonstandard for *nowhere*.

of Use *have*, not *of*, after modal auxiliary verbs (*could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *should*, *would*). See also *could of*; *may of*; *might of*; *must of*; *should of*; *would of*.

off of *Off of* is nonstandard for *off*.

- Don’t fall **off** [not *off of*] the stage.

OK, O.K., okay These three forms are informal. In academic writing, choose words that express more specific meanings. If you must use the term, choose the full word *okay*.

- The weather was **suitable** [not *okay*] for a picnic.

oral, verbal The adjective *oral* means “spoken or being done by the mouth.” The adjective *verbal* means “relating to language” (*verbal* skill) or to words rather than actions, facts, or ideas.

plus *Plus* is nonstandard for *and*, *also*, *in addition*, and *moreover*.

- The band booked three concerts in Hungary, **and** [not *plus*] it will tour Poland for a month. **In addition**, [not *Plus*,] it may perform once in Austria.

precede, proceed *Precede* is a verb that means “go before.” *Proceed* is a verb that means “to advance, go on, undertake, carry on.”

- **Preceded** by elephants and music, the ringmaster **proceeded** into the main tent.

principal, principle As a noun, *principal* means “chief person; main or original amount.” As an adjective, *principal* means “most important.” *Principle* is a noun that means “a basic truth or rule.”

- During the assembly, the **principal** [noun] said, “A **principal** [adjective] value in our democracy is the **principle** [noun] of free speech.”

quotation, quote *Quotation* is a noun, and *quote* is a verb. Don’t use *quote* as a noun.

- One newspaper reporter **quoted** [verb] the US President, and soon the **quotations** [noun—not *quotes*, which is a verb] were widely broadcast.

raise, rise *Raise* is a verb (**raise**, *raised*, *raising*) that means “lift” or “construct” and needs a direct object. *Rise* (**rise**, *rose*, *risen*, *rising*) means “go upward” and doesn’t need a direct object. Substituting *rise* for *raise*, or the opposite, is nonstandard.

- When the soldiers **rise** [not *raise*] early, they **raise** [not *rise* or *rise up*] the flag of liberty.

real, really These words are nonstandard for *very* and *extremely*.

reason is because This phrase is redundant. To be concise and correct, use *reason is that*.

- One **reason** we moved **is that** [not *is because*] our factory was relocated.

reason why This phrase is redundant. To be concise and correct, use *reason* or *why*.

- I don’t know **why** [not *the reason why*] they left home.

regarding See *in regard to*, *with regard to*, *as regards*

regardless See *irregardless*.

respective, respectively *Respective*, a noun, refers to two or more individual persons or things. *Respectively*, an adverb, refers back to two or more individuals or things in the same sequence in which they were originally mentioned.

- After the fire drill, Dr. Daniel Eagle and Dr. Jessica Chess returned to their **respective** offices [that is, he returned to his office, and she

returned to her office] on the second and third floors, **respectively** [his office is on the second floor, and her office is on the third floor].

set, sit The verb *set* (**set**, *setting*) means “put in place, position, put down” and needs a direct object. The verb *sit* (**sit**, *sat*, *sitting*) means “be seated” and doesn’t need a direct object. Substituting *set* for *sit*, and the opposite, is nonstandard.

- Susan **set** [not *sat*] the sandwiches beside the salad, made Spot **sit** [not *set*] down, and then **sat** [not *set*] on the sofa.

shall, will, should *Shall* was once used with *I* and *we* for future-tense verbs, and *will* was used for all other persons. Today, *shall* is considered highly formal, and *will* is more widely used. Similarly, distinctions were once made between *shall* and *should*, but today *should* is preferred. However, in questions, *should* is used about as often as *shall*.

- We **will** [or *shall*] depart on Monday, but he **will** [never *shall*] wait until Thursday to depart. **Should** [or *Shall*] I telephone ahead to reserve a suite at the hotel?

should of *Should of* is nonstandard for *should have*.

sit See *set, sit*.

sometime, sometimes, some time The adverb *sometime* means “at an unspecified time.” The adverb *sometimes* means “now and then.” *Some time* (two words) is an adjective with a noun that means “an amount or span of time.”

- **Sometime** [adverb for “at an unspecified time”] next year, I must take my qualifying exams. I **sometimes** [adverb for “now and then”] worry whether I’ll find **some time** [adjective with a noun] to study for them.

supposed to, used to The final *-d* is essential in both phrases.

- We were **supposed to** [not *suppose to*] leave early. I **used to** [not *use to*] wake up before the alarm rang.

sure *Sure* is nonstandard for *surely* or *certainly*.

- I was **certainly** [not *sure*] surprised at the results.

sure and, try and Both phrases are nonstandard for *sure to* and *try to*.

- Please **try to** [not *try and*] reach my doctor.

than, then *Than* indicates comparison; *then* relates to time.

- Please put on your gloves, and **then** your hat. It’s colder outside **than** you think.

that, which Use *that* with restrictive (essential) clauses only. You can use *which* with both restrictive and nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses; however, many people reserve *which* to use only with nonrestrictive clauses.

- The house **that** [or *which*] Jack built is on Beanstalk Street, **which** [not *that*] runs past the reservoir.

that there, them there, this here, these here These phrases are nonstandard for *that, them, this, these*, respectively.

their, there, they're *Their* is a possessive pronoun. *There* means “in that place” or is part of an expletive construction. *They're* is a contraction of *they are*.

- **They're** going to **their** accounting class in the building over **there** near the library. Do you know that **there** are twelve sections of Accounting 101?

themselves, themselves, themselves These words are nonstandard for *themselves*.

them Use *them* as an object pronoun only. Do not use *them* in place of the adjectives *these* and *those*.

- Let's buy **those** [not *them*] delicious looking strawberries.

then See *than, then*.

to, too, two *To* is a preposition. *Too* is an adverb meaning “also; more than enough.” *Two* is a number.

- When you go **to** Chicago, visit the Art Institute. Try **to** visit Harry Caray's for dinner, **too**. It won't be **too** expensive because **two** people can share a meal.

try and, sure and See *sure and, try and*.

type *Type* is nonstandard when used to mean *type of*.

- I recommend that you use only that **type of** [not *type*] glue on plastic.

uninterested See *disinterested, uninterested*.

utilize *Utilize* is considered an overblown word for *use* in academic writing.

- The team **used** [not *utilized*] all its players to win the game.

way, ways When referring to distance, use *way* rather than *ways*.

- He is a long **way** [not *ways*] from home.

Web site, website Usage at the time of this book's publication calls for two words and a capital W. Increasingly, the informal *website* is being used.

well See *good, well*.

where *Where* is nonstandard for *that* when *where* is used as a subordinating conjunction.

- I read **that** [not *where*] salt raises blood pressure.

which See *that, which*.

who, whom Use *who* as a subject or a subject complement; use *whom* as an object (see 9g).

who's, whose *Who's* is the contraction of *who is*. *Whose* is a possessive pronoun.

- **Who's** willing to drive? **Whose** truck should we take?

-wise The suffix *-wise* means “in a manner, direction, or position.” Never attach *-wise* indiscriminately to create new words. Instead, choose words that already exist; when in doubt, consult a dictionary to see if the *-wise* word you have in mind is acceptable.

World Wide Web Written out, the three words start with a capital W. Its abbreviation only in URLs is *www*. When you use only the word *Web*, start it with a capital W.

would of *Would of* is nonstandard for *would have*.

your, you're *Your* is a possessive. *You're* is the contraction of *you are*.

- **You're** kind to volunteer **your** time at the senior center.

CHAPTER 20

The Impact of Words

20a What is American English?

Evolving over centuries into a rich language, **American English** is the variation of English spoken in the United States. It demonstrates that many cultures have created the US “melting pot” society. Food names, for example, reflect that Africans brought the words *okra*, *gumbo*, and *gober* (peanut); Spanish and Latin American peoples contributed *tortilla*, *taco*, *burrito*, and *enchilada*. Greek speakers gave us *pita*, Cantonese speakers *chow*, and Japanese speakers *sushi*.

20b What are levels of formality in language?

Levels of formality in **DICTION** and **SENTENCE VARIETY** can be divided into three levels: highly informal (an e-mail or a letter to a friend); highly formal (the language of ceremony, written and often spoken); and medium or semi-formal (**ACADEMIC WRITING**).

INFORMAL	Stars? Wow! They're, like, made of gas!
MEDIUM OR SEMIFORMAL	Gas clouds slowly transformed into stars.
FORMAL	The condensations of gas spun their slow gravitational pirouettes, slowly transmogrifying gas cloud into star.

—Carl Sagan, “Starfolk: A Fable”