

Speaking in different situations

How formal or how informal we are depends on the **reason for communicating** and the **relationship** we have with the person we're speaking to. We tend to use more informal language with people we're close to and in situations where we feel most comfortable. We're more formal with people we don't know so well and in situations that are more difficult or uncomfortable.

Look at these examples:

- A. "Could you possibly let me know whether there are any vacancies for administrators?"
- B. "Put the kettle on."
- C. "Hi Kit - I'm really sorry, I can't make it to your barbecue next week after all. I forgot - I promised to take the kids over to Gran's."
- D. "Congratulations on your new job. I'm really pleased for you."

What can you guess about the speakers from the degree of formality?

Example	Relationship close - distant	Situation easy - difficult
A.	The language is very polite. We can guess the speakers don't already know each other. The relationship is distant.	This is a formal request. The speaker hopes the person will do as he asks - the situation is difficult'.
B.	The language is very informal. We can guess that the speakers know each other very well.	This situation isn't difficult.
C.	Again the language is informal. This is a close relationship.	This could be difficult. Even friends can get annoyed when you mess up their plans
D.	This is fairly informal language - but they're not too close.	This is an example of an easy situation.

We could use a grid to show the closeness of the relationship and the type of situation:

