

Informal and Formal Equivalents

Complementary material

The list gives the formal and informal equivalents of commonly-used words and expressions with examples. The first word is the informal version, while the second is the more formal version

Informal	Formal
A bit (e.g. we need a bit more time)	A little (e.g. we would require a little more time)
A lot (e.g. we need a lot more money)	Much, substantial, a great deal (e.g. we would require much more money)
A lot of (e.g. we have had a lot of complaints)	A number of, numerous (e.g. we have had a number of complaints)
About (e.g. I'm calling about the interview)	Concerning/ regarding (e.g. I'm calling concerning the interview)
About (e.g. the journey takes about two hours)	Approximately (e.g. the journey takes approximately two hours)
Agree (e.g. we agree to supply these services)	Undertake (e.g. we undertake to supply these services)
Agree with (e.g. we agree with your opinion)	Concur (e.g. we concur with your opinion)
Aim (e.g. our aim is to expand)	Objective (e.g. our objective is to expand)
Allow (e.g. Please allow me to explain)	Permit (e.g. please permit us to explain)
Answer (e.g. in answer to your question)	Response (e.g. in response to your inquiry)
As soon as possible (e.g. please return the contract as soon as possible)	At your earliest convenience (e.g. Please return the contract at your earliest convenience)
Ask about (e.g. I am writing to ask about your prices)	Inquire (e.g. I am writing to inquire about your prices)
Ask for (e.g. we are asking for a discount)	Request (e.g. we are requesting a discount)
Aware of (e.g. we are aware of the problem)	Conscious of (e.g. we are conscious of the problem)
To back (we fully back the proposal)	To support (e.g. we fully support the proposal)
Be at (go to) (e.g. I will be at the meeting next week)	Attend (e.g. I will attend the meeting next week)
Before (e.g. before joining us, Mr. X worked at...)	Prior to (e.g. Prior to joining us, Mr. X worked at...)
Begin/ start (e.g. we will begin legal proceedings)	Initiate (e.g. we will initiate legal proceedings)
Best (e.g. I'll do my best to help)	Utmost (e.g. I will do my utmost to help)
Better (quality) e.g. these goods are better quality)	Superior (e.g. these goods are of superior quality)
Big (important) (e.g. he is a big customer)	Major (e.g. he is a major customer)
Big (large) (e.g. there have been big changes)	Substantial/ major (e.g. there have been substantial changes)
Bigger (greater) (e.g. this is a bigger problem)	Greater (e.g. this is a greater problem)

Informal	Formal
Bother (e.g. sorry to bother you)	Trouble (e.g. sorry to trouble you)
Bring up (e.g. we need to bring up this point)	Raise (e.g. we need to raise this point)
But (e.g. we'd like to expand, but we need investment)	However (e.g. we'd like to expand; however, we need investment)
Buy (e.g. I bought this scarf from your shop)	Purchase (e.g. I purchased this scarf from your shop)
carry out (e.g. Mr. Hughes carried out all his tasks in a professional manner)	Perform (e.g. Mr. Hughes performed/undertook all his tasks in a professional manner)
Carry on (e.g. we can't carry on like this!)	Continue (e.g. we cannot continue like this)
Chance (e.g. is there any chance of promotion)	Opportunity (e.g. is there any opportunity of promotion?)
Change (e.g. can you change these figures?)	Amend (e.g. can you amend these figures?)
Check (e.g. could you check these figures)	Verify (e.g. please verify these figures)
Choice (e.g. we have no other choice)	Alternative (e.g. we have no other alternative)
Choose (e.g. we have to choose the right person)	Select (e.g. we have to select a suitable candidate)
Clear (e.g. it is clear to us that we need to change our strategy)	Apparent (e.g. it has become apparent that we need to amend our strategy)
Come up with (e.g. they came up with a plan)	Produce/ devise (e.g. they produced a plan)
Cut (e.g. the company has cut the working hours)	Reduce (e.g. the factory has reduced the working hours)
Damaging (e.g. these policies will be damaging to our international image)	Detrimental (e.g. these policies will be detrimental to our international image)
Decide (e.g. they must decide on their priorities)	Determine (e.g. they must determine their priorities)
Difference (e.g. we have noticed a small difference in the figures)	Discrepancy (e.g. we have noticed a slight discrepancy in the figures)
Doubts (e.g. I have big doubts about this)	Misgivings (e.g. I have serious misgivings about this)
Drawback (e.g. there's one small drawback)	Disadvantage (e.g. there's one slight disadvantage)
Ease (e.g. the new one-way system will ease the traffic problems)	Alleviate (e.g. the new one-way system will alleviate the traffic problems)
Earlier (e.g. in earlier letters, you)	Previous (e.g. in previous correspondence, you...)
End/ stop (e.g. we will end the contract for this year)	Terminate (e.g. we will terminate the contract this year)
Enough (e.g. we have enough time)	Ample/ adequate, sufficient (e.g. there is ample time)
Example (e.g. this is another example of the problem)	Instance (e.g. this is another instance of the problem)
Expect (e.g. we expect steady growth next year)	Anticipate (e.g. we anticipate steady growth next year)

Informal	Formal
Fast (e.g. The fast pace of life demands efficient technology)	Rapid (e.g. The rapid pace of life demands efficient technology)
Faulty (e.g. The machine is faulty)	Defective (e.g. the machine is defective)
Find (e.g. You will find the switch behind the fan)	Locate (e.g. The switch can be located behind the fan)
Find out (e.g. We must find out the facts before taking any action)	Establish/ ascertain (e.g. we need to establish/ ascertain the facts before taking any action)
Finish (e.g. Can you finish this by Tuesday?)	Complete (e.g. Can you complete this by Tuesday?)
First (e.g. we first thought it was a temporary problem)	Originally/ initially (e.g. we originally thought it was a temporary problem)
Follow (e.g. police are following inquiries)	Pursue (e.g. Police are pursuing inquiries)
Following/ later (e.g. on following visits...)	Subsequent (e.g. On subsequent visits...)
For the time being (e.g. I'm working here for the time being)	Temporarily (e.g. I'm working here temporarily)
Forget (e.g. I forgot to do the paperwork)	Overlook (e.g. We overlooked the paperwork)
Get (e.g. He got his degree)	Obtain (e.g. He obtained his degree)
Get close to (e.g. As you get close to London, you'll see the signs)	Approach/ near (e.g. as you approach/ near London, you'll see the signs)
Get bigger (e.g. The company is getting bigger)	Enlarge/ expand (e.g. the company is expanding)
Get hold of (e.g. She tried to get hold of the Lawyer)	Contact (e.g. She tried to contact the lawyer)
Get smaller (e.g. Their market share is getting smaller)	Diminish/ decrease (e.g. their market share is diminishing)
Give (a contract/ an award) (e.g. They were given the contract)	Award (e.g. They were awarded the contract)
Give (e.g. H gave her an interview)	Grant (e.g. He granted her an interview)
Give (money) (e.g. He gives money to charity)	Donate (He donates money to Charity)
Give out (e.g. We will give out money according to needs)	Divide/ allocate (e.g. Resources will be allocated on a needs basis)
Give (instructions) (e.g. The company gave instructions)	Issue (e.g. The company issued transactions)
Go for (e.g. We're going for bigger market share)	Aim towards (e.g. We're aiming towards greater market share)
Go on (e.g. Please go on.)	Continue/ proceed (e.g. Please continue/ proceed)
Good (e.g. This arrangement is good for both of us)	Good (useful)/ beneficial (e.g. This arrangement is mutually beneficial)
Happen (e.g. should problems happen)	Occur (e.g. Should problems occur)
Happen again (e.g. We are sorry that the problem has happened again)	Reoccur (e.g. We are sorry that the problem has reoccurred)
Have (own) (e.g. Once we have the facts, we can take the right action)	Possess (e.g. Once we possess the facts, we can take appropriate attention)

Informal	Formal
Help (e.g. We would be happy to help you)	Assist (e.g. We would be happy to assist you)
Hint (e.g. He hinted there would be a pay rise)	Imply/ implication (e.g. He implied there would be a pay rise)
Important/ importance (e.g. Don't underestimate how important this account is)	Significant/ Significance (e.g. Don't underestimate how significant this account is)
Improve (e.g. we need to improve quality)	Ameliorate (e.g. we need to ameliorate quality)
Keep (e.g. Please keep your receipt)	Retain (e.g. Please retain your receipt)
Keep to (obey) (e.g. Please keep to the regulations)	Comply with (e.g. Please comply with the regulations)
Late (e.g. He is never late)	Unpunctual (e.g. He is never unpunctual)
Leave out (e.g. He left out the paragraph)	Omit (e.g. He omitted the paragraph)
Limit (e.g. Overtime is limited to ten hours)	Restrict (e.g. Overtime is restricted to ten hours)
Look closely at (e.g. He looked closely at the report)	Examine (e.g. He examined the report)
Look into (e.g. We will look into this matter)	Investigate (e.g. We will investigate this matter)
Lucky (e.g. He was lucky to get the promotion)	Fortunate (e.g. He was fortunate to get the promotion)
Make (e.g. the company makes enamel ware)	Manufacture (e.g. The company manufactures enamel ware)
Make longer (e.g. we have made working hours longer)	Extend/ prolong (e.g. the company extend its working hours)
Make more difficult (e.g. this has made it more difficult)	Complicate (e.g. this has complicated matters)
Make sure (e.g. Please make sure the doors are locked)	Ensure (e.g. Please ensure the doors are locked)
Many (e.g. There have been many problems)	Numerous (e.g. there have been numerous problems)
More/extra (e.g. We need more people)	Additional/ further/ supplementary (e.g. We require additional staff)
Need (e.g. I need an answer today)	Require (e.g. We would require an answer today)
Next to (e.g. Our office is next to the bank)	Adjacent (e.g. Our office is adjacent to the bank)
Often (e.g. The two roles are often confused)	Frequently (e.g. The two roles are frequently confused)
Payback (e.g. We will pay you back for your expenses)	Reimburse (e.g. We will reimburse you for your expenses)
Pay into (e.g. I pay into the company pension)	Contribute (e.g. I contribute to the company pension)
Please (e.g. Please send back these documents)	Kindly (e.g. Kindly return these documents)
Promise (e.g. I promise you that this will not happen again)	Assure (e.g. We would like to assure you that this problem will not reoccur)
Put off (e.g. They were put off by the market conditions)	Discourage (e.g. They were discouraged by the market conditions)

Informal	Formal
Put right (e.g. We have now put this problem right)	Correct/ rectify (e.g. We have now corrected/ rectified the problem)
Put up with (e.g. we can't put up with this situation any longer)	Tolerate (e.g. we are unable to tolerate this situation any longer)
Quick (e.g. Thank you for your quick reply)	Prompt (e.g. Thank you for your prompt reply)
Reach (e.g. To reach our goals we must...)	Attain (e.g. to attain our goals we must...)
Repeat (e.g. to repeat the terms and conditions...)	Reiterate (e.g. to reiterate the terms and conditions...)
As a result (e.g. As a result, the factory closed)	As a consequence/ consequently (e.g. As a consequence, the factory closed)
Right (correct/ suitable) (e.g. You need permission from the right authorities)	Appropriate (e.g. You need permission from the appropriate authorities)
Say that (e.g. The terms and conditions say that...)	State (e.g. The terms and conditions state...)
Secret (e.g. This report is secret)	Confidential (e.g. This report is confidential)
See (e.g. I have seen a decline in productivity)	Observe/ witness (e.g. I have observed a decline in productivity)
Send (e.g. We sent the goods last week)	Dispatch (e.g. We dispatched the goods last week)
Send back (e.g. Please send back the contract)	Return (e.g. Please return the contract)
Serious/ seriousness (e.g. We need to deal with something very serious)	Gravity (e.g. We need to deal the issue of the utmost gravity)
Show (e.g. He showed initiative)	Indicate (e.g. He indicated that he was not happy)
Small (e.g. We have a small problem)	Minor/ slight (e.g. We have a minor problem)
Speak about (e.g. You spoke about the legal position)	Mention/ refer to (e.g. You mentioned the legal position)
Stay (e.g. He stayed behind to finish the letter)	Remain (e.g. He remained behind to complete the letter)
Stop (yourself from) doing (e.g. Please stop smoking when the plane lands)	Refrain from doing (e.g. Please refrain from smoking when the plane lands)
Straight away (e.g. She told the manager straight away)	Immediately (e.g. She told the manager immediately)
Take up (time) (e.g. this takes up a lot of time)	Consume (e.g. This is time-consuming)
Take part (in) (e.g. many companies are taking part)	Participate (e.g. Many companies are participating)
Tell (e.g. It tells us a lot about his intentions)	Reveal (e.g. It reveals a great deal about his intentions)
Tell (e.g. Please tell us when the goods will arrive)	Advise (e.g. Please advise us of delivery dates)
Tell/ let us know (e.g. Please tell us if anything goes wrong)	Notify/ inform (e.g. Please notify/ inform us of any problems)
Thing (e.g. These things need to be discussed)	Matter/ issue (e.g. these matters/ issues need to be discussed)
Think about (e.g. We need to think about your idea)	Consider (e.g. We need to consider your idea)
Time (e.g. We spoke many times)	Occasion (e.g. We spoke on many occasions)

Informal	Formal
Try (e.g. We will try to deliver by March)	Endeavor (e.g. We will endeavor to deliver by March)
Turn something/ someone to (e.g. We aim to turn leads into sales)	Convert (e.g. We aim to convert leads into sales)
Understand (e.g. As I'm sure you understand...)	Appreciate (e.g. As I'm sure you will appreciate...)
Unhappy (e.g. We are unhappy with the proposal)	Dissatisfied (e.g. We are dissatisfied with the proposal)
Unlucky (e.g. That was unlucky!)	Unfortunate (e.g. That was unfortunate)
Usual (e.g. It is usual practice to screen our candidates)	Customary (e.g. It is customary to screen our candidates)
Want (e.g. I want some information)	Would like/ would appreciate (e.g. I would like/ would appreciate some information)
Want (e.g. I want to tell you that...)	Wish (e.g. We wish to inform you that...)
Do not want to (e.g. He doesn't want you to get involved)	Be reluctant to (e.g. He is reluctant to get involved)
Work with (e.g. We are working with another department)	Collaborate/ co-operate with (e.g. We are collaborating with another department)

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