

17

GENRE AND STYLE

- 1 The following sentences are suggestions – other alternatives will also be acceptable.
 - a. Please refrain from smoking. → (Please) don't smoke.
 - b. We must adhere to these rules. → We must follow the rules.
 - c. Offenders will be prosecuted. → You'll be punished for breaking the rules.
 - d. We apologize for any inconvenience caused. → We are sorry if this makes things difficult for you.
 - e. Their principal arguments so far are without foundation. → They don't have any good arguments.
 - f. The company put \$4 million of new capital in for the development of new technologies. → The company has paid \$4 million for developing new technologies.

- 2 The following words/phrases are suggestions – other alternatives will also be acceptable.
 - a. If past or extant life is discovered on Mars, two possible outcomes follow, both profoundly cool. → interesting
 - b. Three-ply Bristol board has a surface *kind of like* illustration board. → reminiscent of
 - c. The undersigned hereby acknowledges receipt of the *stuff* described on the annexed invoice. → goods
 - d. Every author who has ever *eyeballed* a blank page knows the primary difficulty in telling a story. → beheld, contemplated
 - e. The success of the program is directly related to the presence of highly motivated, savvy teachers. → insightful, knowledgeable

- f. Combine a morning of exploring the historic city of York with an evening enjoying an *awesome* performance of the York Mystery Plays in the city's Museum Gardens. → *enthraling (a wonderful)*

3 In what way(s) do the members of each of the following pairs differ in terms of topic, target group, purpose and/or wording?

- a. 1 Please take a seat.
2 Sit down, will you!

The differences in wording concern the presence/absence of the politeness marker *please* and the tag *will you*. This makes the speaker of sentence (a1) sound more polite than the speaker of (a2). The topic and purpose are the same = get hearer to sit down. The differences in wording and politeness suggest that the speaker of (a2) either has clear authority over the hearer or that the speaker is angry. The speaker of (a1) treats the hearer as equal.

- b. 1 Documented trends in increasing prevalence of overweight and inactivity mean that pediatricians must focus preventive efforts on childhood obesity.
2 It has been well documented that more and more people are overweight, often because they are inactive. Therefore paediatricians need to find out how they can help children avoid becoming overweight or obese.

The topic is the same, but the target group probably is not. Sentence (b1) is formal, with heavy noun phrases. The style would indicate that both the writer and the reader are specialists. In (b2) the same information is given as in (b1), with a less heavy style. The target group could be interested non-specialists, such as readers of a magazine or a newspaper.

- c. 1 Steel is an alloy of iron and carbon in which the carbon content ranges up to 2 percent (with a higher carbon content, the material is defined as cast iron). By far the most widely used material for building the world's infrastructure and industries, it is used to fabricate everything from sewing needles to oil tankers.
2 Steel is a hard metal that people use to make many different products. Car bodies, bridges, building frames, and containers are just a few of the things made from steel.

The topic of passages (c1) and (c2) is roughly the same, and the purpose of both is to inform about steel. However, (c1) contains much more information and uses a much more specialized vocabulary, while (c2) uses everyday words. This suggests that the

target groups are different. In fact both passages are taken from encyclopedias, of which the second is specifically for children.

- d. 1 The new Prius offers something for everyone. An EPA-estimated combined 50 mpg rating for those who'd like to spend less on gas.
- 2 The current Prius is rated at 72.4 mpg based on European mileage testing, though it registers 50 mpg in combined city/highway driving based on U.S. testing.

The topic of passages (d1) and (d2) is the same, namely a car called Prius. However, (d1) contains more everyday language and makes reference to users of the car. Passage (d2) has more specialized vocabulary and refers to *testing* of the car. While (d1) seems to offer the car and its features to a potential user, (d2) is merely informative. This makes it likely that the purpose of d1 is to sell the Prius, while the purpose of (d2) is to give information about the car to a relatively knowledgeable readership.

- 4 Newspaper-style versions of this text will vary greatly, so we make no attempt here at producing a model text. However, the kinds of changes that would be required (even for a local newspaper) include the following:

- The text must have a title that is likely to arouse interest, such as “Dead Duck Drama in Regent’s Park” or “Local lad (11) kills duck with sandwich”.
- The text should start with an introduction of the incident and the people in it (and since this is for a local newspaper, probably also their approximate addresses).
- The free indirect speech style of the fiction text will have to be changed, with more focus on facts. Some of Marcus’s thoughts might be converted to statements from him to the journalist, though.
- The dialogue cannot be kept in its original form: it can either be omitted altogether, or just summarized. One or two of the utterances can be kept as statements to the journalist, but possibly in a less colloquial style. For instance “That’s not a sandwich, that’s a bloody French loaf. No wonder it keeled over. That would have killed me.” might be turned into: Will Freeman (36), who witnessed the incident, says “It wasn’t a sandwich, it was a French loaf which could have killed anyone”.

- 5 Findings from the British National Corpus:

- a. *I* and *you* are most frequent in spoken English (and least in the academic genre) while *me* is most frequent in fiction. So we may conclude that spoken (conversational)

English are interactive and use a lot of first- and second-person pronouns. These are also common in fiction, which may contain dialogue and/or be first-person narratives.

- b. The pattern for pron. ALL is the same as those for *I/me/you*: the highest number is found in spoken English, closely followed by fiction. Academic English contains the lowest number.
- c. The pattern for noun. ALL is almost the opposite of that for pronouns: Academic English has the highest number, very closely followed by all the other written genres except fiction. Spoken English has the lowest number. This indicates that more formal written genres have more full noun phrases while spoken English relies more on pronouns.
- d. Nouns ending in *-ization* are most common in academic English. However, they do not have the lowest number in spoken English. A look at 100 random examples of **ization* words in speech indicates that these words occur most in more formal settings, such as meetings and speeches. Newspapers are somewhat surprisingly at the bottom of the list. [The search should actually be repeated with **isation*, which seems to be the spelling variety favoured by most of the British newspapers and magazines. This changes the picture quite a lot: academic English is still the genre that uses the highest number of **isation* words, but the lowest number is found in fiction (followed by spoken English). The use of such words seems to be closely connected with formality level.]