
Language Activity 12: Register Analysis

In the United States, even business conversations are normally quite informal by standards in many countries. But there are many levels of informality, and attorneys must be able to use different styles of language in different situations. Look at the sentences *a–e*. Basically, they all have the same content and can be used to bring about the same result.

- a. Bring me that book.
- b. Please bring me that book.
- c. Will you bring me that book?
- d. Could you bring me that book?
- e. Would you mind bringing me that book?

From (*a*) through (*e*), each sentence is a little more polite or formal. Although in many circumstances *a* would be felt as rude, in a normal working relationship in a moderately informal office, peers would not hesitate to use (*a*) “Bring me that book” with one another. On the other hand, if your superior used (*a*) to address you, it would seem a bit harsh, too brusque.

Exercise A. Sentence Correction

In each of the following mini-dialogues, there is a problem with the command. It may be impolite or even too polite.

1. At the law library:

Law librarian: Can I help you?

Law student (politely): Give me the latest copy of the *Cornell Law Review*.

correction:

2. In line at the bank:

Bank clerk (politely but business-like): Would you mind giving me your name, address, and account number?

Customer: Joshua Bark, 3456 W. 12th, 907845

correction:

3. In law school:

Law professor (as a matter of fact): Would you not forget to turn in your briefs.

Students: Oh!

correction:

4. At the law library:

Librarian (firmly): Keep it down!

Law student: Sure, sorry.

correction:

5. In the study group:

Law student (quickly): Could you keep talking? I'll be right back.

Second law student (friendly): Please don't hurry.

correction:

correction:

Language Activity 13: Debate

The phrases and statements that follow are commonly used when expressing agreement or disagreement or when building an argument. Please note that some expressions are stronger and/or more direct than others. This is true in the case of the first two sections **Agree** and **Disagree**. For example, *definitely* and *absolutely* are much stronger than *I agree*. You must also consider your tone and stress and intonation as some of the expressions that are less direct or forceful may be used more directly and forcefully by changing your tone.

All of these expressions may be used in a debate.

Agree

I agree.

I couldn't agree more.

That's true.

exactly/definitely/absolutely/of course

Disagree

I disagree.

I don't agree [at all], and here's why [list reasons. . . .]

Yes, that is true in part, but. . . .

Well, you have a point, but. . . .

That's an interesting point; however, . . .

Yes, but on the other hand, . . .

Build an argument

There are [two, three, . . .] reasons why we believe/take the position. . . .

In the [first, second,] place,

For example/instance,

To demonstrate/illustrate this point,

Additional information

Furthermore,

Moreover,

In addition,

Emphasis

Let me highlight/underscore the importance of. . . .

This is important because [showing causation]. . . .

Conclusion

Let me repeat my/our position.

In conclusion/summary,