

What is Register and Formality Levels?

Worksheet

Register is the level of formality in language — French speakers shift between formal register (polite, grammatically precise) and informal register (casual, colloquial) based on audience and context.

Questions

1. Which is the most formal?

- A) Ça va?
- B) Comment allez-vous?
- C) T'es ok?
- D) Ça dit?

2. Use the correct register: Speaking to your professor.

- A) Tu as eu mon email?
- B) Avez-vous reçu mon email?
- C) T'as eu le mail?
- D) Vous avez mon email?

3. What is a key feature of colloquial French?

- A) Use of complex subjunctive
- B) Abbreviations, slang, and relaxed grammar
- C) Formal word order
- D) Vous with everyone

4. Identify the inappropriate register shift:

- A) Letter to manager: 'Merci pour votre temps.'
- B) Text to friend: 'Salut! Ça va?'
- C) Email to company: 'Yo, j'ai une question.'
- D) Greeting to elder: 'Bonjour Madame.'

5. Write the same idea in formal and informal French: 'How are you?'

6. Adjust register: 'The meeting will happen tomorrow.'

7. Identify register shift: Rewrite a letter to your teacher in formal French.

8. Define: What is register in French?

9. Define: When do you use 'vous'?

10. Define: When do you use 'tu'?

Answer Key

1. B) Comment allez-vous? — 'Comment allez-vous?' uses vous and full grammar — most formal and polite.
2. B) Avez-vous reçu mon email? — Formal register requires 'vous' and proper grammar; B uses passé composé for politeness.
3. B) Abbreviations, slang, and relaxed grammar — Colloquial speech is casual — abbreviations (la réu, le resto), slang (cool, sympa), and dropped words.
4. C) Email to company: 'Yo, j'ai une question.' — 'Yo' and 'j'ai une' is too informal for a company email — breaks register inappropriately.
5. Formal: 'Comment allez-vous?' (vous form, polite, grammatically precise) Informal: 'Ça va?' (tu understood, casual, idiomatic) Context matters: Use 'vous' with strangers, elders, authority; 'tu' with friends and peers.
6. Formal (business email): 'La réunion aura lieu demain.' (future tense, formal word order) Informal (text to friend): 'La réu' c'est demain.' (abbreviation, casual) Or: 'On a une réunion demain.' (on = we, very casual)
7. Start: 'Madame/Monsieur,' (formal greeting) Use vous throughout: 'Je vous remercie de...' End: 'Cordialement,' (formal closing) Avoid: 'Ok, merci!' or abbreviations — too casual for this context.
8. The style and formality level of language, adjusted for social context and audience.
9. With strangers, authority figures, elders, or in formal situations; always in formal register.
10. With close friends, family, peers, or in casual, informal contexts.

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