

## Formal Distance

---

**In English there are many ways of showing formal distance or closeness between people. Also sometimes formality is required by the nature of the request.**

**Task 1. Compare these examples.**

<b>Informal</b>	<b>Formal</b>
1. Just go way, will you?	Could you please go way?
2. Do you want a cup of tea?	Would you like a cup of tea?
3. Lend me a pen for a minute.	You couldn't possibly lend me some money, could you?

**Notice the different verb forms that are used.**

**Task 2. Look at the following examples and decide if they are more formal or more informal.**

1. So yes, if you could do that, that would be very good.
2. Might I help you?
3. If you will take a seat I'll see if he's free to see you.
4. Can I ask you a question?
5. You look great today.
6. A: Let's go to the cinema tonight.  
B: Ok – what do you want to see?
7. I wonder if I could interrupt for a moment...
8. Can I help you?
9. Would you like to go out tonight?
10. If you would take a seat I'll see if he's free to see you.
11. Would you mind if I opened the window.
12. What's going on here?
13. Please be quiet.
14. I was wondering if you could do me a favour.....
15. I would just like to say a few words.....

**Notice the verb forms used to be more formal.**

Distant modal verbs (eg would and might) are more formal than close modal verbs (eg can). Not using modal verbs is more direct and less formal.

The 'Past Continuous' (eg 'I was wondering') is very formal.

**Formality all depends on who you are talking to and your relationship with them. You can be more informal to a close friend except when you are asking for a special or difficult favour.**