

## Conventions and Presentation

### Editing Level 1: Conventions

# Real Speech

**W**hen people talk—or email—they don't necessarily follow all conventional rules. For example, because conversation is informal, speakers tend to use some slang. They also speak in single words and phrases instead of complete sentences, shorten words with contractions, or slide over pronunciations. (In writing we change spelling to show this.) Capturing the sound, rhythm, and flow of real speech in writing requires bending a few rules of conventions in order to make the dialogue sound authentic.

Strange as it sounds, though, bending the rules can take as much concentration as following them. It requires knowing rules SO well that you can manipulate them purposely to give your writing just the sound you want—like a jazz pianist running the scales. Authentic speech makes characters seem real—and that gives writing voice.

## A Warm-Up

---

### Part 1

Following are two sentences written in informal speech to reflect how a person—or a character in a book—might *really* sound. Read each one aloud and figure out what the person is saying. Then rewrite the sentence, using correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Be sure your revision is a conventionally correct, complete sentence.

1. “Wouldja hold on a sec? I gotta git somethin’.”

---

---

2. “Ya wanna come with? ‘S gonna be great!”

---

---

## Part 2

Here’s a slightly different challenge—courtesy of ye olde days and William Shakespeare. It’s actually an insult, taken from the play *All’s Well that Ends Well*. First translate it into a grammatically complete sentence that reflects 21<sup>st</sup> century formal English. Then translate it into “real” speech—what you or a friend might actually say to someone if you meant to convey these very same ideas. **Remember:** Play with the language, but do not change the meaning!

3. “He’s a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise breaker, the owner of not one good quality.”

### Updated Formal Version:

---

---

---

**Updated “Real” Speech** (what a modern teenager might really say):

---

---

---

## Share and Compare

Meet with a partner to share your work. Did you translate the sentences in similar ways—even if you used different language? Try reading them aloud. Which ones sound the most like real speech to your ear?

## Keeping It Real

Let's look at four bendable rules that can transform the sound and rhythm of "real" speech. You'll have a chance to warm up with each one—then use any or all of them to turn a very formal passage into something more authentic. Ready? Then let us venture toward reality. Or, uh, let's get real.

### Guide to Authenticity

#### Rule bender #1: *Use contractions*

**Before:** I am going shopping at the mall. I will see you later.

**After:** I'm going shopping at the mall. I'll see you later.

**Before:** I would have another burger, but I am stuffed.

**After:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Rule bender #2: *Play with spelling to mimic actual pronunciation (using apostrophes to show missing letters)*

**Before:** I am going shopping at the mall. I will see you later.

**After:** I'm goin' shoppin' at the mall. See ya later!

**Before:** You are starting a fire under a tree? Are you crazy?

**After:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Rule bender #3: *Use phrases or fragments in place of complete sentences*

**Before:** Yes, I am going shopping at the mall. I will see you later.

**After:** Yeah—goin' shoppin'! Later!

**Before:** I am taking four science classes right now. It is quite challenging.

**After:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Rule bender #4:** *Use appropriate but informal slang*

**Before:** I am going to see a movie.

**After:** I'm gonna catch a flick.

**Before:** I feel in the mood to spend some time with my friends.

**After:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now that you're warmed up, have some fun turning the following passage from stuffy and formal into something a little more authentic. Imagine it's a passage from a novel written for students your age. The author is older than you are—but wants the voice of the narrator (the person speaking in this novel) to sound about 14 years old. Use your **Guide to Authenticity** to see what you can do. Make any changes you like. You're the editor!

### **Driving With My Brother**

Would you allow me to share some interesting information?  
As of last Tuesday, my older brother Josh became an officially licensed driver. If one were to ask my opinion, the person who granted him this license might not be fully sane.

Allow me to explain what I mean. That evening, my mother and father stated that for the sake of their personal convenience, Josh will henceforth transport me to and from my soccer practice. When they relayed this to me, my face took on a new expression. I said, "Are you making a joke?"

Perhaps you are thinking that *my* primary concern is for *my* own personal safety. You are correct. But try to envision the following in your mind. As we were heading home yesterday, Josh exceeded the speed limit by more than 30 miles per hour and illegally entered two intersections on a red light. I continually cried out, “What are you attempting to do? Do you wish to put us in mortal danger?”

He smiled and replied, “I am currently in control of this vehicle! And please keep all further opinions to yourself.”

## Share and Compare

Meet with a partner to take turns reading your new versions aloud. Underline any sentence your listeners identify as especially authentic. Which rule-bending strategies did you make the most use of? Did you come up with any of your own?



### A Writer's Questions

Bending rules to create authentic speech can lend significant voice to writing. Are there times, though, when formality is important? How do you know when it's all right to play with the rules—and when formality counts?

## Editing Level 2: Presentation

# Personalized Greetings

**E**ver found yourself standing in front of a rack of greeting cards, reading one after another, looking for the one that is just right? If so, you understand the importance of presentation and its connection to voice. The perfect greeting card has to have the right message (right for you, right for the person who'll receive it), color, art, and voice. As much as possible, it needs to look and sound as if you had written it yourself. Hey, wait a minute—that's a pretty good idea!

### A Warm-Up

---

Have you ever sent or received a greeting card? Can you recall the occasions? Look at some of the cards your teacher and classmates have collected to share. Working with a partner or writing circle, brainstorm three lists:

- Occasions for which people commonly send or receive greeting cards
- Categories of people greeting cards are typically designed for
- Features you think make a good greeting card

#### Occasions for Sending Greeting Cards

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

My own idea: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Groups of People Greeting Cards Are Designed For**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Features of a Good Greeting Card**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Share and Compare**

Meet with your writing circle to share your lists. How similar were your lists? Add any additional ideas to your list that come up during sharing. Also discuss the questions on the next page.

- Which part of a greeting card do you look at first (not including the slot where money could go)?
- Do you like funny or serious cards?
- Do you ever save cards you receive?
- Do you prefer paper or electronic greeting cards?

## Presentation Practice

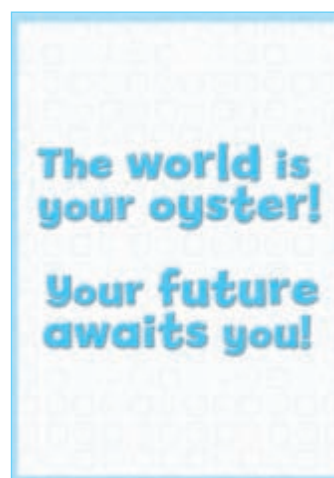
### You Shouldn't Have! (Really!)

Have you ever received a greeting card from a relative or a friend that just didn't seem to match you or the occasion? Maybe you received a birthday card with a joke you didn't find funny. Or you got a card covered with cat photos—when everyone knows you're a dog person. Well, *someone* approved those designs!

Imagine *you* design and write greeting cards for a major publisher of such cards. (Actually, many people do this for a living.) You've been asked to preview two greeting cards to see if each is a match for the receiver and the occasion. Look carefully at all elements—referring to the list you made earlier. Then decide whether to (1) keep the card as is, (2) reject the idea totally, or (3) revise the card slightly so it's a better fit with the intended audience.

#### Example 1

Intended audience/occasion: Child turning six





## My Decision

\_\_\_\_\_ Keep and publish as is—this will be a best-seller!

\_\_\_\_\_ Reject—a bad idea! Wrong card for the audience/occasion!

\_\_\_\_\_ Keep, but revise as follows:

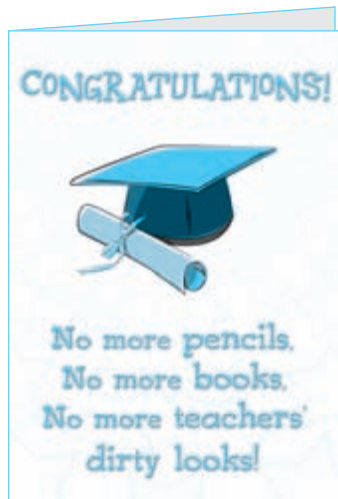
---

---

---

### Example 2

Intended audience/occasion: Student graduating from high school



## My Decision

\_\_\_\_\_ Keep and publish as is—this will be a best-seller!

\_\_\_\_\_ Reject—a bad idea! Wrong card for the audience/occasion!

\_\_\_\_\_ Keep, but revise as follows:

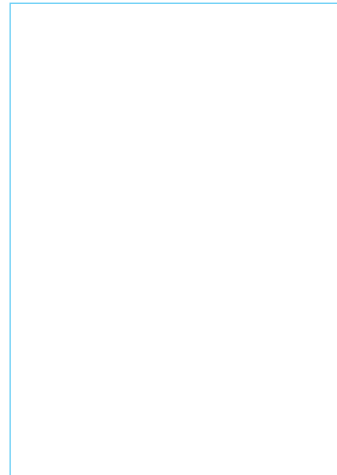
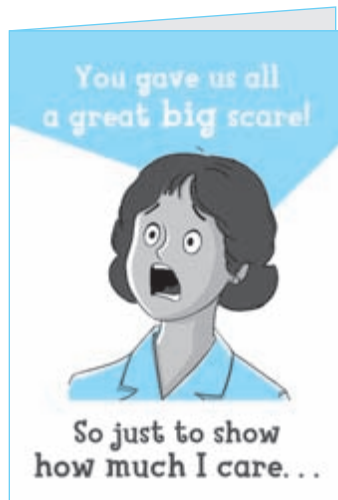
---

---

---

### Example 3

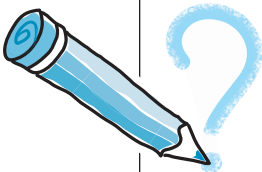
Intended audience/occasion: Get well card for someone not seriously ill



(You complete the inside—words and graphics.)

### Share and Compare

Meet with your writing circle to compare your comments for each greeting card example and the words and graphics you used to complete Example 3. Did you agree about keeping, rejecting, or revising Examples 1 and 2? What do you consider the best design or writing ideas?



### A Writer's Questions

Do people sometimes send greeting cards instead of making a phone call or a personal visit? Why? Why do you think more people don't create their own greeting cards for all occasions?

## Presentation Matters

For this part of the lesson, you'll design a greeting card from scratch. You will need to choose a *real* person as the receiver—friend, parent or guardian, grandparent, uncle, aunt, cousin, teacher, or anyone you know. You'll also choose the occasion.

Keeping your audience in mind, create the message, both cover and inside; and design the layout, including art or pictures, color, fonts—the whole package. Make sure your message and design perfectly match the audience and the occasion.

**NOTE:** Make the message your own, even if it contains some familiar phrases and language—such as “Happy Birthday!” or “Congratulations!” Design or describe the art, specifying whether you want black and white or color, drawings, paintings, or photos, and so on. Use the space on the next page to sketch your art ideas, if you want.

### Greeting Card Details

**1. Receiver** (Who is the card for?):

---

**2. Occasion** (Why are you sending this card?):

---

**3. Cover message:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**4. Inside message:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**5. Color scheme:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**6. Graphics** (pictures, art, and so on)

Cover: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Inside: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Score for Voice \_\_\_\_\_