

Changing Registers

An activity of "A love story for the coral reef crisis"

In "A love story for the coral reef crisis" (*What's Up*, May 2020), the author tells us about her love for parrotfish. Does it feel like she is speaking to you in your school canteen? This is because her speech uses the informal register. The table below shows some differences between the informal and formal registers.

| Informal | Formal |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually first person contractions e.g. "doesn't" sentence fragments, or short sentences e.g. "OK, second amazing thing." colloquial and/or emotional expressions e.g. "boring stuff" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually third person no contractions e.g. "does not" standard grammar with full sentences e.g. "The second amazing feature is..." more formal expressions, less personal e.g. "uninteresting details" |

Now, imagine you are writing an article about Dr Johnson's love for parrotfish for your school magazine. You would have to use the formal register. How do you do that?

Let's practise with some sentences. In the table below, the informal features have been underlined. Rewrite them using the formal register. The first one has been done for you as an example.

| Original sentences | Rewritten in the formal register |
|---|--|
| 1. <u>Once upon a time, I was a stubborn</u> five-year-old who decided to become a marine biologist. | <i>Ayana Elizabeth Johnson was five years old when she decided to become a marine biologist.</i> |
| 2. There are over 500 fish species that live on Caribbean reefs, but the ones <u>I just can't get out of my head</u> are parrotfish. | |
| 3. First, they have a mouth like a parrot's beak, which is strong enough to bite coral, although mostly they <u>are after</u> algae. | |
| 4. OK, <u>second amazing thing. After all that eating,</u> they <u>poop</u> fine white sand. | |
| 5. Third, they <u>have so much style</u> . Mottled and striped, teal, magenta, yellow, orange, polka-dotted — parrotfish are a big part of what makes coral reefs so colourful. | |
| 6. <u>Plus, in true diva style,</u> they have multiple <u>wardrobe changes</u> throughout their life. <u>A juvenile outfit, an intermediate getup, and a terminal look.</u> | |