Personal and impersonal writing

When we write we need to be sure that the language we use is appropriate. Either standard or non-standard English can be used in personal writing, but this type of writing often has a chatty (colloquial) style and generally makes use of contractions, such as I’m, isn’t, etc. Personal writing is used in texts such as blogs, emails, text messages and notes. Here is an example of the personal form:

Watch out, guys! I’ve noticed over the past few weeks the restaurant’s been charging people way too much.

Impersonal writing, on the other hand, always uses standard English. Contractions are not used and the language is often more formal, matter-of-fact and technical. Complex sentences are also common. Impersonal writing is used in texts such as reports, official letters and formal invitations. Here is an example of the impersonal form:

Please be aware that it has been brought to our attention in recent weeks that the restaurant has been overcharging its customers.

Warm up

1 Copy the table and place the following texts under personal or impersonal.

- a letter from the gas company
- a text message
- an email to a friend
- a job application
- a police report
- a postcard
- a note to your mum
- a letter of complaint

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