

Inference and meaning



In the BBC One series *Secrets and words*, Jackie writes a letter to her husband John to let him know that she wants to end their relationship.

When someone speaks to you, you can often infer, or guess, meaning from their tone of voice, or their body language. For instance, someone can say “*sit down*” in a friendly voice, or they might shout it as an order.

In scripts for actors, writers choose words carefully and use punctuation to suggest body language and tone of voice.

Jackie gets up and grabs her coat.

John: “Sit down!”

Often, we can read ‘between the lines’ to infer tone of voice just from the words. For instance, if we write to someone we care about, our language may be affectionate (“Dear Johnny”, “My dearest John”, or “Darling”) even if the message is simple (‘Please get some milk.’). Look at the examples below:



Factsheet Level 1