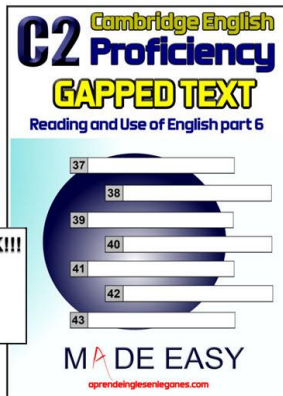


THE FORMER / THE LATTER

In formal English, we use the terms “the former” and “the latter” to refer back to the first and last item of a set respectively.

C2 PROFICIENCY LEARN HOW TO DO GAPPED TEXT EXERCISES



the former (formal)

used for referring to the first of two people, things, or groups previously mentioned:

- Both Williams and Andrews claim the property. The former insists that it was a gift.
(the former = Williams)
- My boss offered me more money or a company car and I chose the former.
(I chose more money)

the latter (formal)

used for referring to the second of two people, things, or groups previously mentioned:

- She offered me more money or a car and I chose **the latter**.
(I chose a car)
- He did well in both schoolwork and sport and won a number of medals in **the latter (=in sport)**.
- Given the choice between working for someone else and working for the family business, she'd prefer **the latter**.
(= she'd prefer to work for the family business.)

Important note: If you are talking about three or more things or people, don't use 'the latter' or 'the former'. Use an expression with the first, the second, or the last.

- The company has three branches, in Birmingham, Plymouth, and Greenock. The last of these will close next year.