**Formal English Versus Informal**

**June 20 2018**

In short, formal English is used in writing essays, cover letters to apply for jobs, or emails and letters at work. Informal English is used in every day communication with friends and relatives. Informal English includes various terms and expressions that are not used by the majority of English speakers. Speaking of informal English we mean colloquialisms, jargon and slang.

There is a certain difference between the slang, jargon and colloquial terms. Slang is used in definite social groups (for example among the teenagers); colloquialisms are commonly used across age and socioeconomic groups; jargon is a set of terms used in a particular professional setting (IT, law, medicine). Definite informal terms may be vulgar and inappropriate in specific situations. Some terms are not understood by the non-native speakers or vice-versa. Irrespective of the differences between these concepts colloquialisms, slang and jargon are parts of informal language, which is not used in formal and academic writing.

By contrast, formal English presumes professional language and choice of terms. The following table will help you choose proper terms and avoid informal counterparts, that diminish the quality of your formal writing.

Please, also review the 'Colloquialisms' section of our Manual on Academic Writing.

| **Informal** | **Formal** | **Informal** | **Formal** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| & | and | deal with | handle |
| anybody | anyone | seem | appear |
| big | large, great | cell | cell phone |
| get | receive, understand (depending on context) | net | Internet |
| kind of/sort of | type of | keep | retain |
| on the other hand | conversely, by contrast | free | release |
| so | because | put up | tolerate |
| movie | film | ring up | call |
| kid | child | show up | arrive |
| a bunch | a group | let | permit |
| mom | mother | get | obtain |
| dad | father | photo | photograph |
| say sorry | apologize | give the go ahead | authorize |
| go up | increase | anyways | nevertheless |
| go down | decrease | plus | moreover/ furthermore |
| set up | establish | but | however |
| look at | examine | so | therefore |
| blow up | explode | also | in addition |
| find out | discover | ASAP | as soon as possible |
| bring about | cause | Okay, OK | acceptable |
| put off | postpone, delay | In the meantime | in the interim |
| rack up | accumulate | I think | in my opinion |
| make up | fabricate | in the end | finally |
| stand for | represent | to sum up | in conclusion |
| find out | discover, ascertain | in a nutshell/basically | to summarize |
| leave out | omit | lots of/ a lot of | much, many |
| point out | indicate | tons of, heaps of | a number of |
| go against | oppose | need to | required |
| get in touch with | contact | think about | consider |
| it is about | it concerns | smart | intelligent |
| T.V. | television |  |  |