

INFORMAL & COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH

STW UNIT 02



WHAT IS COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE?

- Colloquial language is regarded as the simplest and the most natural form of language used in daily communication.
- The context is familiar and informal, in which interlocutors feel relaxed, and face no social or academic pressure.
- Interactions that are held at home, at work, at social gathering or any place that do not add any psychological pressure on the interactants.
- More connected with the verbal interactions than the written one.
- Majority of human daily interaction is in the form of colloquial language.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

- 1. Short and simple sentences e. g. I'm home!
- 2. Sentences are often grammatically incomplete e. g. On my way home ("I'm" missing); She ran a mile in four ("minutes" missing); You see? ("Do" missing).
- 3. Grammatical inversion is restricted e. g.

I did not notice that she'd had her hair cut until she told me. (Not inverted)

Not until she told me did I notice that she'd had her hair cut. (Inverted)

CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

- 4. In colloquial language, there are contractions e. g. let's, I'd, isn't, she'd, you'll, I've etc.
- 5. Colloquial English uses clipped words e. g. plane, bot, gator, phone, net (fore-clipping), fridge, flu (medial clipping), exam, bio, memo, gym, photo (back-clipping)
- 6. Relative pronouns are often ignored e. g. that, which, what, where, whose – the man (that) you saw yesterday is my brother.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

- 7. Academic or formal words such as utilize, assist, purchase, nevertheless etc. are actively avoided
- Highly informal single words and expressions are used e. g. 'wassup', 'I feel ya', 'mood', 'my bad' 'shady', 'hot', 'lit', 'salty', 'cheers', 'back off', 'grow up', 'fess up', 'scoot over' etc.

HOW TO AVOID COLLOQUIAL (INFORMAL) WRITING

- COLLOQUIALISM may be acceptable in FRIENDLY E-MAILS and on CHAT PLATFORMS and SOCIAL MEDIA.
- Excessive colloquialism is an unacceptable, major pitfall that lowers the quality of FORMAL, PROFESSIONAL writing.

- **1. Understand when to use formal English:** Speech is usually in informal English. Though talking informally makes the listener feel more comfortable, writing informally can make the readers think that the writer is unprofessional.
- **2. Understand basic English punctuation:** Punctuation is particularly important in formal English.
- **3. Understand that some punctuation is not acceptable in formal English:** The dash, the parentheses, and the exclamation mark are not universally acceptable. In the formal English, the exclamation mark should be used only when a character screams, “Fire!” or “Help!”
- **4. Avoid “colloquialisms”,** explained previously, as well as solecisms, such as “ain’t”, which are considered grammatically non-standard.

- **5. Omit needless words:** Some adverbs and phrases significantly reduce the formality of writing e. g. "you know", "well", "just to say", "basically", "actually" etc.
- **6. Avoid contractions:** Contractions dramatically reduce the formality of your composition. "Cannot" is preferable to "can't" in most formal contexts, especially in professional and scientific writing. Some contractions such as "o'clock" (for "of the clock") are commonplace and may be used.
- **7. Avoid the first and second person:** Formal writing often tries to be objective, and the pronouns "I" and "you" tend to imply subjectivity. Phrases such as "I think that" can be deleted when it is obvious that this is the author's opinion. In formal writing, "we" replaces "I," and "one" replaces "you" or when a general reader is indicated.
- **8. Know when to end a sentence with a preposition** (even in the most formal of English).

- **9. Always include the relative pronoun:** In speech and casual writing, the sentence “that was the boy I saw on the street” will become in formal writing, “He was the boy whom I saw on the street.”
- **10. Do not begin a sentence with a coordinating conjunction:** Any sentence that starts with a coordinating conjunction can be attached to the previous sentence, creating a compound sentence. Instead of “and” or “but”, these words may be used: “additionally,” “also,” “alternatively”, “nevertheless”, “moreover”, “either,” “though,” and “however” instead of starting with “and” and “but”.
- **11. Develop short sentences into longer ones:** Formal writing generally uses longer sentences than casual writing. Contrast of short, simple sentences and longer, complex or compound sentences add flow and variety to writing.
- **12. Avoid clichés:** Clichés are sayings or expressions, which are sometimes humorous, but often turn writing into unoriginal content e. g. as red as a rose, burning the midnight oil, last but not the least.
- **13. Avoid stage directions:** Words like “I am writing to you to ask you to...”, or “this paper is going to talk about how...” makes the writing sound conversational and informal.



Y'all

A graphic illustration of the word "Y'all" in a stylized, 3D font. The 'Y' is grey with a yellow shadow. The 'a' is purple with a yellow shadow. The 'l's are pink with a teal shadow. A small speech bubble above the 'a' contains the text "NOMIL".

THANK YOU!