

## APPROPRIATE WORDS

Writing is more formal than speech. Much good writing is formal without being stuffy. It is just formal enough to sound serious. When writing gets too **informal**, readers begin to feel that the writer is just kidding around.

Casual conversation uses many words that have a homey, folksy flavor. Some college dictionaries label such words “colloquial.” **Colloquial** does not mean “local” but “chatty” or “conversational.” Here are some colloquial expressions that are too informal for most college writing:

Colloquial	Formal	Colloquial	Formal
boss	employer, superior	faze	disconcert
buddy	friend, companion	flunk	fail
deal	agreement	snoop	pry, spy
flop	failure	snooze	nap, doze
folks	parents, family	enthused	enthusiastic
kid	child	snappy	brisk, quick
tyke	small child	snooty	snobbish

In private conversation, students often use a special kind of colloquial language: **slang**. Slang is freewheeling. It constantly picks up new words and gets rid of old ones. Much of it is unintelligible outside the group where it originated. The humor used in slang is often extravagant or sarcastic. It easily offends readers who expect a writer to be factual and fair. Here are some slang expressions that you will do well to avoid in writing:

Slang	Formal	Slang	Formal
cop	Police officer	goof	Make a mistake
dope	Narcotics	gyp	swindle, cheat
guts	Courage	sack	dismiss, discharge
guy	man, boy	broke	out of money
old man	Father, husband	lousy	very poor, inferior
sucker	Dupe	well heeled	wealthy

Each of the following sentences contains an expression that is too informal for serious writing. Write a more appropriate replacement in the space provided.

1. A person’s ideas change in many ways when he begins to \_\_\_\_\_  
associate with the rest of the college gang.
2. Charles was an extremely successful lawyer, though he \_\_\_\_\_  
was somewhat of a crackpot in his private life.

3. The picture looked more like a mugshot than like a formal portrait. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The new manager was the most stuck-up person I had ever met. \_\_\_\_\_
5. After dinner, the mayor introduced one of her political buddies as the chief speaker of the evening. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Because of unexpected rain, the parade commemorating the founding of the city was a flop. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Up to the winning game, the sportwriters had claimed that our quarterback was all washed up. \_\_\_\_\_
8. At the assembly, the student body president acted very enthused over the new activities program. \_\_\_\_\_
9. When I called the boy's parents, I did not have the guts to tell them what had happened. \_\_\_\_\_
10. I found the objective part of the exam easy, but the essay part threw me. \_\_\_\_\_
11. The contract incorporated a deal that allowed the state to retain nominal title to the land. \_\_\_\_\_
12. The campus building program had to be curtailed when the legislature failed to appropriate. \_\_\_\_\_
13. The investors took the president of the company to court, claiming they had been had. \_\_\_\_\_
14. The government talked about the energy crisis for years but never got its act together. \_\_\_\_\_
15. The kidnapper had several times threatened to blow away his hostages. \_\_\_\_\_
16. My friend Pat gave up the job because it caused constant hassles at home. \_\_\_\_\_
17. Sue knew her supervisor would squawk if she took the day off. \_\_\_\_\_
18. Divorced parents often try to lay a guilt trip on each other about the hurt done to their children. \_\_\_\_\_
19. I told her to stop bugging me about the rent. \_\_\_\_\_
20. The manager had always been picky about details of dress and appearance. \_\_\_\_\_