

THE SPECTRUM OF FORMALITY AND INFORMALITY

Formal tone and informal tone occur in a spectrum, ranging from slang on one end to stuffy on the other. "Stuffy" vocabulary can sound pretentious or robotic. "Slang" or "informal" vocabulary can sound uneducated or unprofessional. Most college writing should fall in the "formal" category but avoid the artifice of stuffy style.

Slang	Informal	In-Between	Formal	Stuffy
"It's o.k., dudettes!"	<i>"It's okay, gals."</i>	"It is alright, my friends."	"It is acceptable, ladies."	"It is within tolerable parameters, O my female comrades."
"Tough luck, pal, yer ol' lady's bit the dust!"	<i>"We're really sorry, but your wife's suddenly died!"</i>	"We are truly sorry, but your wife has died unexpectedly."	"We regret to inform you of the untimely death of your spouse."	"With commiseration, we send condolences regarding the demise of your marital unit."
"Does that gal wanna be an egghead or sumptin' like that?"	<i>"Does that girl want to get smart or what?"</i>	"That girl works hard at becoming clever, doesn't she?"	"That studious girl wants to be truly intelligent--is it not so?"	"Does not that diligent female strive for status as a genuine intellectual?"
"They're majoring in way-killer stuff. Must be a royal pain."	<i>"They're majoring in hard subjects. It must be rough."</i>	"They have chosen difficult studies. It must involve demanding work."	"They have chosen difficult studies. It must involve demanding work."	"Their curricula involves challenging fields of endeavor. It must necessitate meticulous labor."
"I'd like to get that job as dispatcher you've got in the paper."	<i>"I'd like to have that job as dispatcher you've advertised in the local news."</i>	"I would like to have that position as dispatcher you have listed in <i>The Knoxville Sentinel</i> ."	"I would like to have that position as dispatcher you have listed in <i>The Knoxville Sentinel</i> ."	"I seek employment concerning the advertised occupation in this diurnal periodical."