Appropriate Word Choice

With so many words to choose from, it can be difficult to identify which are most appropriate for general academic discourse.

Although these examples of improper word choice may look the same and do indeed have many similarities between them, the important thing to remember is, that unless under special circumstances, DON’T USE THEM.

- **Slang** - Slang can be defined as “words or expressions that are considered casual, facetious, or fashionable by a particular age group, locality, or profession”
  - ex. You know the words that you can look up on UrbanDictionary.com? Don’t use those.

- **Colloquial Words** - this includes words or phrases commonly used in informal conversation, written dialogues, or personal essays. These are generally not acceptable in formal academic writing.
  - ex. To name only a short few, phrases such as “kicked the bucket,” “dumb,” and “kid around” are generally inappropriate.

- **Regionalisms** - While Regionalisms can help make writing more vivid in a specific context, it is important to consider the rhetorical situation before using regionalisms.
  - ex. Using words such as “tank” to refer to a pond or “sweeper” to refer to a vacuum is often too informal for academic writing.

- **Jargon** - Jargon is described as “the technical language tailored to a particular occupation.” While technical language is important to specialized writing, it is not appropriate for a diverse audience. Jargon is best used when the audience can understand it.

© 2009 Anne Burke and Honors college Writing Center