



Palm Beach Atlantic University  
Center for Writing Excellence

## WORD CHOICE

### Basic Tips:

1. A writer's tone and level of formality vary with context.
2. In most academic and professional writing, formal language will have a better effect on the audience.
3. When writing, be aware of the pitfalls of a variety of language, including slang (*duh*, *cool*) and colloquial language (*snooze*), technical and occupational language, pompous language, euphemisms, and double-speak.
4. If one is writing for a particular field, be sure to explain any technical language to ensure that the audience will understand the terms.
5. Avoid pompous language, or unnecessarily formal language that is irrelevant or could otherwise be replaced by more clear and straightforward language.
  - **Pompous** – Pursuant to the August ninth memorandum regarding petroleum supply exigencies, it is incumbent upon us to endeavor to make maximal utilization of telephonic communication in lieu of personal visitation.
  - **Revised** – As noted in the August ninth memo, please make telephone calls rather than personal visits whenever possible because of the gasoline shortage.

### *Tip for Multilingual Writers from The St. Martin's Handbook*

“In writing standard academic English, which is fairly formal, students are often tempted to use many “big words” instead of simple language. Although learning impressive words can be a good way to expand your vocabulary, it is usually best to avoid flowery or fancy language in college writing. Academic writing at U.S. universities tends to value clear, concise prose.”

6. Similes and Metaphors are particularly helpful in building understanding by painting a picture for the audience.
  - **Similes** – Use *like*, *as*, *as if* or *as though* to make a clear comparison between two things.
 

“The rain poured down the windowpane, as if the night was crying.”
  - **Metaphors** – Implied comparisons without using *like*, *as*, *as if*, or *as though*.
 

“Time is a thief.”