

Common Colloquialisms and Idioms

Colloquialisms and idioms are words or phrases that are not formal or literary. They are acceptable in everyday speech but not academic writing. The following are some common colloquialisms and idioms with suggested substitutions. However, the meanings for colloquialisms and idioms vary with the context in which they are used, so the suggested substitutions will not always be appropriate. Some phrases are simply best to omit. Use your own discretion.

Colloquialism/idiom	Suggested substitution
Any which way	However
Kind of	Similar to; almost as if
Sort of	Similar to; rather
Loads/tons/a whole bunch/a lot	Very many; numerous; countless
A couple	A few; two; a small number
A little bit	A small amount
Cool	Interesting
Hit the hay	Went to bed/sleep
Harped	Complimented; spoke well of
Just	Only; simply
Throws me off	Is surprising
Kind of tough	Hard; difficult
Sort of like	Comparable to
Screw-ups	Incompetent people; sinners
Sank in	Registered; understood
OK or okay	Appropriate; acceptable
Pop into my head	Thought of a new idea
Pounded into my brain	Repeated numerous times
No clue	Oblivious; ignorant
Fell through the cracks	Neglected
Start off	To begin
Hitting the jackpot	Experience good fortune
Beat around the bush	Avoiding the topic; misdirection
Hop right in	Join
So yeah	Therefore...
Not really all that bad	Manageable; enduring; tolerable
Fly through	Work quickly
Plow forward	Persist
Just a little	A small amount
Pretty funny	Somewhat/rather humorous
Muster up	Gather; summon
Weed/wade through	Examine

Spot (as in "spot my mistakes)	Notice; recognize
A bit more	Additional
Put my finger on	Identify, recognize
Hit a roadblock	Encounter an obstacle; prohibited from progress
Deal with	Encounter; resolve
Kind of thing	A similar item/idea
Slip away	Leave discreetly; escape
Time crunch	Limited amount of time
Hit me	Realization
Hit a writer's block	Unable to write
Perfectly fine	Acceptable
A big deal	Important; widespread
Wrap things up	Conclude
Digging deeper	Researching/examining further
Right off the bat	Immediately
Guess what	Simply do not use this in formal writing.
Get to	Have the opportunity to
Way more	Much more
Come/coming up with	Think of
Pave a new view	Introduce a new view/idea
Pass up	Relinquish; surrender; reject; refuse
Look out for	Be alert for
Spot on	Accurate; exact
Folks	People
Threw me for a loop	Surprising
Going along with	In relation to; similarly
Out there	Bizarre; strange; peculiar
Comes/boils down to	Main point; most important part
Some sort of	A form of
Holing up in my room	Isolating
Looked into	Researched
Hanging out	Socializing; spending time together
Cut out (as in "I am cut out for")	Predisposed; inclined
Kids	Children
Like crazy	To a great degree; fervently
Jump into things	Fully dedicate/commit/devote
Lots of	Many; numerous; multitudes
Got	Understood
Throw someone under the bus	Cause someone to encounter trouble by placing blame on that person