



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

## Writing Skills Improvement Program

### Tips for Reducing Awkwardness

No one likes to see “awk” scribbled in the margins of a paper. Do you use some of the phrases described below? Try leaving these types of phrases out, and your sentences may flow better!

Clichés are expressions that once may have been vivid but now are stale from overuse. Clichés often contain repeated sounds or are used to make comparisons. Some are simply combinations of words that for some reason catch on and are repeated again and again.

<i>tried and true</i>	<i>dropped it like a hot potato</i>
<i>the worse for wear</i>	<i>cool as a cucumber</i>
<i>takes the cake</i>	<i>a bolt from the blue</i>
<i>crushing blow</i>	<i>stifling heat</i>
<i>hardened criminal</i>	<i>one in a million</i>

Euphemisms are the substitution of a polite or inoffensive term for one that might be considered coarse or unpleasant: for example, *senior citizen* versus *old person*.

However, euphemisms can create a weak style that minimizes the importance of the message.

*Artificial stimulants* versus *alcohol and drugs*  
*Neutralize* versus *assassinate*  
*Previously owned vehicles* versus *used cars*

Wordiness convolutes ideas by being indirect or abstract.

<u>Wordy</u>	<u>Not as wordy</u>
at this point in time	now
subsequent to	after
a majority of	most
due to the fact that	because
in the neighborhood of	about

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