If you’ve already come up with some ideas of what you’d like to write about that you’re confident in and happy with, then great! When it comes to putting ideas to paper, however, keeping in mind proper and appropriate word choice will allow you to convey what you would like to say that much more effectively.

Word choice is a broad topic that can extend to many facets of writing. This handout will focus on three particular issues to look out for that will help your writing become more precise and original.

**JARGON:**

Jargon refers to specialized or technical terms that the majority of your audience would be unfamiliar with. The use of jargon can alienate readers who don’t have knowledge of that particular terminology.

Here’s an example of a sentence filled with jargon:

“We are continuing our efforts that we began last fiscal year to pursue patent infringers in an effort to monetize the value of our extensive patent portfolio.”

Confusing? The issues of clarity that using jargon causes can be solved by restating your idea in simpler, more direct terms. Here is a new sentence that means the same thing as the one above, this time without any jargon:

“To protect our many patents and the income they bring, we pursue violators.”

**CLICHES:**

Cliches are phrases that are so commonly used that implementing them in your own writing can run the risk of diminishing the originality of your own ideas.

Here is a list of common cliches that you can look out for and be sure to avoid:

- “In this day and age…”
- “Throughout history…”
- “At the end of the day…”
- “Little did I know…”
- “Time will tell”
**EXPLETIVES:**

The kind of expletive you might first think of upon seeing the word is, of course, something you should avoid in academic writing. But beyond just referring to foul language, expletives also describe phrases that contain unnecessary verbiage.

Here is an example of a sentence with expletive construction:

“It is inevitable that oil prices will rise.”

The italicized words in the above sentence don’t add to the meaning of the sentence in any way. As such, they can simply be removed, like so:

“Oil prices will inevitably rise.”

By rephrasing the sentence without any expletives, it is much more direct and concise. Moreover, the sentence keeps its original meaning. To avoid expletive construction, keep an eye out for sentences that start with phrases like “It is” or “There are” and think of ways to rephrase them with more direct construction.