

# JARGON AND CLICHÉS

## JARGON

“I know there are professors in this country who ‘ligate’ arteries. Other surgeons only tie them, and it stops bleeding just as well.” – Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

Jargon is specialized language used among members of a trade, profession, or group. While jargon may be appropriate to use when communicating with others who are knowledgeable about certain subjects, it often appears exclusionary and even confusing to members of your audience who are not familiar with the terminology. Even in cases when you are writing to a specified audience, jargon should be used only when everyday language will not suffice. The examples below illustrate how using commonly understood terms is more effective than using jargon and how getting rid of jargon can help reduce wordiness.

**Jargon:** For years the indigenous body politic of South Africa attempted to negotiate legal enfranchisement without result.

**Revised:** For years the indigenous people of South Africa negotiated in vain for the right to vote.

**Jargon:** Due to our cash burn rate, we will have to undergo consolidation at some juncture.

**Revised:** Because of our expenditures, we will have to layoff some employees in the future.

**Jargon:** Due to the cyber rage he experienced when trying to access sources from Dana’s webliography, Professor Howell, who was not at all computerate, decided to stick with his chalk-and-talk method of teaching.

**Revised:** Frustrated by Dana’s bibliography of Internet sources, Professor Howell, who was not computer literate, decided to stick with a traditional lecture.

## CLICHÉS

Clichés are predictable and overused phrases. Avoid them whenever possible; find new and original ways to make your point instead.

Examples:	I slept like a log	Dead as a doornail
	It was a dark and stormy night	Cool as a cucumber
	Two wrongs don’t make a right	A light at the end of the tunnel
	Out of the frying pan and into the fire	Like a bull in a china shop
	Water under the bridge	He beat around the bush

However, a cliché may work as an ironic contrast to larded language. If you want to use one, try adding an interesting, unusual, or surprising twist.

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer’s Reference*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003. 131-2, 142-3.