



School of Liberal Arts

University Writing Center

"Because writers need readers"

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## *Jargon and Overworked Phrases*

*Jargon is a technical phraseology used within any particular trade, bureaucracy, or branch of learning. It is objectionable in writing when it is wordy or unnecessary. Frequent use of the passive voice, of longer than necessary words, and of abstract generalizations is characteristic of jargon. Its effect, and often its intention, is to muddy the meaning.*

Consider the following pairs of sentences. Why is sentence B better?

- A. By two months of age, the child at the developmental median will smile at his material parent's face.
- B. At two months the average child will smile at the sight of his mother's face.
  
- A. It is obvious from the difference in elevation with relation to the short depth of the property that the contour is such as to preclude any reasonable development for active recreation.
- B. The plot is too deep for a playground.

To be able to eliminate jargon from your writing, you need to recognize it. Avoid the following writing habits. Remember, simple is better.

1. Using several words or longer than necessary words in place of one simple one.

Avoid:	Better:
have the capability to	can
facilitate	make easy
utilization of medical equipment	use of equipment

2. Using abstract nouns ending in -tion, -ity, ect. Or verbs ending in -ize.

Avoid:	Better:
utilization	use
finalize	end
interface	coordinate

3. Using stock phrases (avoid all of the following):

within the framework of	at this point in time
in the final analysis	at the earliest possible moment
take under advisement	as a matter of fact

4. Substituting euphemisms:

Avoid:	Better:
Under the influence of alcohol	drunk
Relieved of the position	fired
Shortfall	mistake
Terminal living	dying

5. Using the passive rather than the active voice.

The machines were found to have been functionally impaired. (passive)

The machines broke down. (active)

It was discovered that, on the part of a majority of the class population, the writing of the essay was not preceded by construction of an outline. (passive)

More than half the students did not make an outline before writing the essay. (active)

Longer than necessary words characterize the jargon of business. Rudolf Flesh presents this 60-word blacklist in his book On Business Communications. (Words in parentheses are better).

Advise (write)	Insufficient (not enough)
Affirmative (yes)	In the event that (if)
Anticipate (seem)	Locate (find)
Appear (seem)	Negative (find)
Ascertain (find out)	Obtain (get)
Assist (help)	Personnel (people)
Complete (fill out)	Pertaining to (of, about)
Comply (follow)	Presently (now)
Constitute (be)	Prior to (before)
Cooperate (help)	Prohibit (forbid)
Deceased (dead)	Provide (give, say)
Deem (think)	Pursuant to (under)
Desire (want)	Represent (be)
Determine (figure, find)	Request (ask for)
Disclose (show)	Require (need)
Effect (make)	Residence (home, address)
Elect (choose, pick)	Reveal (show)
Endeavor (try)	Review (check)
Ensue (follow)	Spouse (wife, husband)
Execute (sign)	State (say)
Experience (have)	Submit (give, send)
Facilitate (make easy)	Subsequent (later)
Failed to (did not)	Substantial (big, large, great)
Forward (send)	Sufficient (enough)
Furnish (send)	Supply (send)
In as much as (since)	Sustain (suffer)
Inconvenience (trouble)	Terminate (end, stop)
Indicate (first)	Thus (so, that way)
Initial (first)	Transpire (happen)
In lieu of (instead of)	Vehicle (car)