

Clichés

Many writers want to create vivid images within a text, often through the use of **similes** (comparisons between two objects using “like” or “as”) and **metaphors** (comparisons made without “like” or “as”).

He was as cool as a cucumber.
Writing is thoughts on paper.

However, once these similes and metaphors become repetitive and overused, they have lost their effectiveness: they have become **clichés**. The problem with clichés is that they often do not create new or exciting images; as a writer, you should be striving to create memorable images.

As found in Mark Connolly’s *The McGraw-Hill Workbook*, the examples below show how to avoid cliché usage:

Cliché: We were amazed. The fluid dripping from under Tom’s car was not black but **as white as snow**.
Improved: We were amazed. The fluid dripping from under Tom’s car was not black but milk white.
Avoided: We were amazed. The fluid dripping from under Tom’s car was not black but white.

The following checklist contains a list of clichés that should be replaced if used in writing:

apple pie order	final analysis	ripe old age
bottom line	flat as a pancake	sink or swim
brutal murder	green with envy	sneaking suspicion
cold as ice	in today’s society	vast majority
face the music	last but not least	viable alternative
fame and fortune	long hot summer	vicious circle

Practice exercise:

Locate the clichés in the following paragraph and replace them with new phrases if possible.

In today’s society, the vast majority of college graduates may struggle with finding a job that suits their major. Often times after graduation, students must face the music and realize that they may have to look to other fields in order to find employment. A viable alternative may be the pursuit of fame and fortune through exploring career opportunities. You may be green with envy if your friends have less difficulty finding a job; however, the bottom line is that the job market is a vicious circle. By the end of the long hot summer following your graduation, you may have a sneaking suspicion that your prospects are as cold as ice.

Possible clichés to reword: “face the music,” “the pursuit of fame and fortune,” “green with envy,” “vicious circle,” “cold as ice”
“After graduation, students often realize they may have to look to other fields in order to find employment.”