**Least Wanted Words and Phrases in Academic Writing**

The following is a list of overused words and phrases that reduce the effectiveness and sophistication of academic writing. Replacing them with more fitting expressions can improve your flow, voice, and overall style.

1) *In today’s society*: Too vague. Contextualize the society to which you’re referring. Do you mean contemporary American culture? Do you mean modern Western society?

2) *Since the beginning of time* or *Throughout human history:* These are sweeping, unsupportable claims, be more specific.

3) *In this paper I will* or *In conclusion*: These phrases are unnecessary if you write a strong, clear introduction that prepares the reader for the content of your paper, and if you have an effective conclusion.

4) *everyday / every day*: *Everyday* as one word means common or ordinary (*Today I followed my everyday routine.*). *Every day* as two words refers to time (*I follow the same routine every day.*).

5) *center around*: One can *center on* or can *hover around*, but one cannot center around.

6) *Webster's Dictionary defines \_\_\_\_ as*: Dictionaries and encyclopedias are unimpressive research sources. If you define a word or term, paraphrase a relevant, credible person or source (for example, *Freud defines superego as…*).

7) *could of / should of*: The proper phrases are *could have* and *should have*.

8) *alot / a lot*: Alot is not a word. *A* *lot* is always a two-word phrase and may lack an academic tone because it is informal.

9) *due to the fact that*: This is an awkward phrase. Rather than “I’m under a lot of stress due to the fact that I just began college” why not write, “I just began college so I’m under a lot of stress”?

10) *they*: Be aware of what *they* refers to in your sentence (singular vs. plural) or whether you need it at all. This is incorrect: “In *Time* magazine they compare. . .”. This is correct: “The *Time* magazine film critic compares. . . ”.

11) *use / utilize*: *Use* means use. Utilize most often means “to find a profitable or practical use for.” The sentence *The teachers were unable to use the computer*s might mean only that the teachers were unable to operate them, whereas *The teachers were unable to utilize the computers* suggests that the teachers could not find ways to employ the computers in instruction.

12) *Irregardless*: Irregardless is not a standard English word. Regardless is a word. Irrespective is a word.