## **Learning from clichés** | By John Beatty | LaSalle University | beatty@lasalle.edu

Clichés — ENG 310

Clichés show lazy usage, and often are written as they are pronounced. There are several ways they can be misused, but the most revealing and embarrassing has to be what I call the re-invented cliché. In some of these cases, the original has been lost, resulting in a new hybrid that is nonsensical because it is devoid of context. Some of the later examples are more to do with homonyms than clichés. All seem to share origins in spoken English — the tendency to write as we speak. The problem goes beyond word choice to spelling ("Febuary," "paraphenalia," "idealogical" etc.), agreement ("There's three things to do") and so on.

Re-invented	Original	Context	
1. Pedal to the medal	pedal to the metal	driving	
2. No holes barred	no holds barred	wrestling	
3. Tough road to hoe	tough row to hoe	farming	
4. All intensive purposes	all intents and purposes	legal(?)	
5. A shoe-in	a shoo-in	scaring birds?	
6. Pom-poms	pompons	Pom-pom is weaponry	
7. Takes a lot of flack	takes a lot of flak	military (anti-aircraft)	
8. Card shark	card sharp	(now OK)	
9. Boyed by the results	buoyed by the results	sailing	
10. Funds were dispersed	funds were disbursed	bourse=purse	
11. Putting sandbags on the levy	sandbags on the levee	rivers	
12. This doesn't gibe	this doesn't jibe	sailing	
13. Trucks pealed off into the desert	trucks peeled off	fruit	
14. Recession-wracked economies	recession-racked	torture	
15. A responsive cord	a responsive chord	music	
16. That doesn't auger well	that doesn't augur well	fortune telling	
17. Radio antennae	radio antennas	electronics	
18. That doesn't phase me	that doesn't faze me	from "freeze"?	
19. Worldwind	whirlwind	weather term?	
20. Taking a clue from the audience	cue	theater	

21. The dye was cast	die	tool-making
22. self-depreciation	self-deprecation	finance
23. dollars and sense	dollars and cents	(this was not a pun)
24. nip it in the butt	nip it in the bud	gardening?
24. daring-do	derring-do	"Ivanhoe"
25. idealogical	ideological	ideology
26. raising cane	raising Cain	Bible
27. towing the line	toeing the line	army?
28. come down the pipe	come down the pike	turnpike
29. free reign	free rein	horse riding
30. scull and crossbones	skull and crossbones	pirates
31. cold slaw	cole slaw	cabbage (Dutch)
32. Detroit has the most per capital	per capita	Latin
33. meterologist	meteorologist	meteor
34. trying to diffuse a bad situation	defuse	bombs
35. put the breaks on spending	brakes	cars
36. the entomology of the word	etymology	truth
37. all-night virgil	all-night vigil	vigilant
38. I could care less	I couldn't care less	
39. Who would of thought?	who would have thought?	
40. I've had to make due before	I've had to make do before	
41. one in the same	one and the same	
42. counter culture	counterculture	
43. never stepped foot in it	set foot	varies regionally
44. if worse comes to worse	if worse comes to worst	
45. Music hath charms to soothe the	Wm. Congreve	
46. It's a mute point	moot	law
47. She was making deflamatory rer		
48. The events occurred by happen-		
49. Volcanoes, tornadoes and other		
50. Fragrant disregard for the law	flagrant	

51. That's my story on the nutshell	in a	not seafood
52. I have a sick sense about these things	sixth	
53. Let's try taking a different tact	tack	sailing
54. I was given short shift	shrift	religious absolution
55. We grew up in track housing	tract	
56. Heart-rendering scene	heart-rending	cloth/sewing