Clichés

A cliché is a figure of speech which has lost its effect through overuse. The avoidance of cliché enables your writing to be more thoughtful and original. Here is a short list:

- All’s fair in love and war
- As luck would have it
- Back to square one
- Bat out of hell
- Better late than never
- Blood is thicker than water
- Calm before the storm
- Cleanliness is next to godliness
- Dead as a doornail
- Fifteen minutes of fame
- Greek to me
- In a nutshell
- Kid in a candy store
- Let the cat out of the bag
- My two cents
- No guts, no glory
- Take one for the team

These phrases are all fairly obvious clichés. They should typically be avoided at all costs. (It should be noted that ‘avoided at all cost’ is a cliché. It would have been more economical to say simply that they should ‘be avoided.’)

The idea of a cliché extends beyond these stock figurative phrases. Overused narrative and rhetorical strategies, and even some concepts, can be considered clichés.

For example, writing a story in which the character suddenly wakes up at the end (It was all a dream!) is a cliché.

In an academic paper, beginning your conclusion with ‘in conclusion’ is a cliché. Additionally, making an argument by depending upon concepts like ‘bleeding-heart liberal’ or ‘fat-cat Republican’ is clichéd.