

Self-Edit Checklist: Cliches and Idioms

Cliches and idioms are overused, making them weak and meaningless.
Avoid them to make your writing fresh and interesting.

a chip off the old block	a clean slate	a dark and stormy night	a loose cannon
a pain in the butt	a tough row to hoe	a word to the wise	ace in the hole
ace up his sleeve	afraid of his own shadow	against all odds	all fun and games
all in a day's work	all talk, no action	American as apple pie	an axe to grind
armed to the teeth	as luck would have it	as old as time	as the crow flies
at my wits end	avoid like the plague	babe in the woods	back against the wall
back in the saddle	back to square one	back to the drawing board	bad to the bone
badge of honor	baptism by fire	bat out of hell	be all and end all
beat a dead horse	beat around the bush	bee in her bonnet	behind the eight ball
bend over backwards	benefit of the doubt	bent out of shape	bet your bottom dollar
better late than never	better safe than sorry	bide your time	big as life
big man on campus	bird's eye view	bite the bullet	black as coal
black as pitch	black as the ace of spades	blast from the past	bleeding heart
blind ambition	blind as a bat	blow off steam	blow your own horn
blushing bride	bored to tears	bright and early	broken record
bull by the horns	bull in a china shop	burning question	burst your bubble
bury the hatchet	busy as a bee	call a spade a spade	called onto the carpet
calm before the storm	can of worms	case of mistaken identity	cat got your tongue
caught in the crossfire	caught red-handed	caught with his pants down	checkered past
chip on her shoulder	chomping at the bit	clear as a bell	clear as mud
close to the vest	cock and bull story	cold shoulder	come hell or high water
count your blessings	crack of dawn	crash course	cry her eyes out
cry like a baby	cry me a river	cut and dried	cut through the red tape
cut to the chase	cute as a button	cuts to the quick	dark before the dawn
day in, day out	dead as a doornail	dime a dozen	divide and conquer
dog days	dog eat dog	dog tired	don't burn your bridges
don't rock the boat	down and out	down in the dumps	down on his luck
down the hatch	down to earth	draw the line	dressed to kill
dressed to the nines	drives me up the wall	dull as dishwater	eagle eye
ear to the ground	earn his keep	easier said than done	easy as pie
eat your heart out	eat your words	eleventh hour	even the playing field
every fiber of my being	eye for an eye	eyes in the back of her head	facts of life

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fair weather friend	fall by the wayside	fan the flames	feast or famine
feather in his cap	few and far between	fifteen minutes of fame	fine kettle of fish
fish out of water	fit as a fiddle	fit to be tied	flat as a pancake
flip your lid	fly by night	fly the coop	follow your heart
for all intents and purposes	for the birds	for what it's worth	force of nature
force to be reckoned with	forgive and forget	free and easy	free as a bird
fresh as a daisy	full steam ahead	fun in the sun	garbage in, garbage out
get a kick out of	get a leg up	get down and dirty	get his back up
get the lead out	get to the bottom of	get your feet wet	gets my goat
gilding the lily	give and take	go against the grain	go for broke
go the extra mile	go with the flow	goes without saying	good as gold
good deed for the day	green thumb	green-eyed monster	grist for the mill
growing like a weed	hair of the dog	hand to mouth	happy as a clam
hasn't a clue	have a nice day	have high hopes	have the last laugh
head honcho	hear a pin drop	heart's content	hem and haw
high and dry	high and mighty	high as a kite	hit paydirt
hold your head up high	hold your horses	hold your own	hold your tongue
honest as the day is long	horse of a different color	hot under the collar	icing on the cake
if the shoe fits	in a jam	in a jiffy	in a nutshell
in a pig's eye	in a pinch	in a word	in her element
in hot water	in over his head	in the gutter	in the nick of time
in the thick of it	in this day and age	in your dreams	it goes without saying
it takes all kinds	it takes one to know one	it's a small world	it's only a matter of time
Jack of all trades	jockey for position	jog your memory	Johnny-come-lately
joined at the hip	judge a book by its cover	jump down your throat	jump in with both feet
jump on the bandwagon	jump the gun	jump to conclusions	just the ticket
justice is blind	keep an eye on	keep it simple, stupid	keep the home fires burning
keeping up with the Joneses	keep your chin up	keep your fingers crossed	kick the bucket
kick up your heels	kid in a candy store	kill two birds with one stone	kiss of death
knock his block off	knock it out of the park	knock on wood	knock your socks off
know the ropes	know the score	knuckle down	knuckle sandwich
knuckle under	labor of love	land on your feet	lap of luxury
last but not least	last hurrah	last-ditch effort	law of the jungle
law of the land	lay down the law	leaps and bounds	let sleeping dogs lie
let the cat out of the bag	let the good times roll	let your hair down	let's talk turkey
letter perfect	lick your wounds	lies like a rug	life's a bitch

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life's a grind	light at the end of the tunnel	lighter than a feather	lighter than air
like clockwork	like death warmed over	like father, like son	like taking candy from a baby
like there's no tomorrow	lion's share	live and learn	live and let live
long and short of it	long lost love	look before you leap	look down your nose
look what the cat dragged in	loose cannon	lose your head	lose your temper
lounge lizard	loved and lost	low man on the totem pole	luck of the draw
make money hand over fist	make my day	make the best of it	make your blood boil
man of few words	man's best friend	mark my words	missed the boat
moment in the sun	moment of glory	moment of truth	money to burn
more power to you	movers and shakers	naked as a jaybird	naked truth
neat as a pin	needless to say	neither here nor there	never look back
never say never	nip and tuck	nip it in the bud	no accounting for taste
no guts, no glory	no love lost	no pain, no gain	no skin off my back
no stone unturned	no time like the present	nose to the grindstone	not a hope in hell
not a minute's peace	not in my backyard	not playing with a full deck	not the end of the world
not written in stone	nothing to sneeze at	now we're cooking	off the top of my head
off the wagon	off the wall	old hat	older and wiser
older than dirt	on a roll	on cloud nine	on her high horse
on pins and needles	on the bandwagon	on the money	on the nose
on the spot	on the tip of my tongue	on the wagon	on thin ice
one brick short	one foot in the grave	one in a million	one red cent
only game in town	open a can of worms	open the flood gates	out of sight, out of mind
out of the woods	out on a limb	over a barrel	over the hump
pain and suffering	panic button	par for the course	part and parcel
party pooper	pass the buck	patience is a virtue	pay through the nose
penny pincher	perfect storm	pig in a poke	pile it on
pillar of the community	pin your hopes on	plain as day	play by the rules
play your cards right	playing the field	playing with fire	pleased as punch
plenty of fish in the sea	poor as a church mouse	pot calling the kettle black	pull a fast one
pull your punches	pulling your leg	pure as the driven snow	put one over on you
put the cart before the horse	put the pedal to the metal	put your best foot forward	put your foot down
quick as a bunny	quick as a wink	quick as lightning	rags to riches
raining buckets	raining cats and dogs	rank and file	reap what you sow
red as a beet	red herring	reinvent the wheel	rich and famous
rings a bell	ripped me off	rise and shine	roll over in his grave
rub the wrong way	running in circles	salt of the earth	scared stiff

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scared to death	sealed with a kiss	second to none	see eye to eye
seen the light	seize the day	set the record straight	sharp as a tack
shoot for the moon	shoot the breeze	shot in the dark	shoulder to the wheel
sick as a dog	sigh of relief	sink or swim	skating on thin ice
slept like a log	slinging mud	slippery as an eel	smooth as a baby's bottom
sow wild oats	speak of the devil	spilled the beans	spinning your wheels
spoke with relish	spring to life	stand out like a sore thumb	start from scratch
stick in the mud	stiff upper lip	stitch in time	stop and smell the roses
strong as an ox	stubborn as a mule	stuffed shirt	sweating blood
sweating bullets	take a load off	take one for the team	take the bait
take the bull by the horns	take the plunge	takes one to know one	takes two to tango
the almighty dollar	the more the merrier	the real deal	the real McCoy
the red-carpet treatment	the same old story	thick as a brick	thick as thieves
think outside the box	this day and age	this point in time	three sheets to the wind
three strikes against him	throw in the towel	tie one on	tighter than a drum
time and time again	time is of the essence	tip of the iceberg	to each his own
to the best of my knowledge	toe the line	tongue-in-cheek	too good to be true
too hot to handle	too numerous to mention	touch with a ten-foot pole	tough as nails
trials and tribulations	tried and true	trip down memory lane	twist of fate
two cents worth	two peas in a pod	ugly as sin	under her thumb
under the counter	under the gun	until the cows come home	unvarnished truth
up his sleeve	up the creek	up to his ears in trouble	uphill battle
upper crust	vain attempt	vanquish the enemy	vested interest
wakeup call	warm welcome	watch your p's and q's	watch your tongue
watching the clock	water under the bridge	weather the storm	weed them out
week of Sundays	went belly up	wet behind the ears	when push comes to shove
when the cat's away	white as a sheet	whole ball of wax	whole hog
whole nine yards	wild goose chase	wisdom of the ages	words fail me
work like a dog	world weary	worst nightmare	wrong side of the bed
yanking your chain	you only live once	young and foolish	you're the boss