



A Four-Step Process for Breaking Clichés

So you've got clichés in your novel.

Thankfully, we're here to help.

You only need to fear clichés if you let them get to you. Instead of cowering in fear at clichés, here's a four-step process you can take to rip them out of your novels.

1. Find and List your Story's Clichés

First, get out a piece of paper and list every single place you can think of in your novel where you're using tropes that are in danger of becoming clichéd.

If you're having trouble figuring out where your clichés are, [consider perusing the many articles on Kingdom Pen about common clichés](#) to find which ones you're using in your novel.

Take a couple days on this if you have to, but you want to begin by compiling a list of as many clichés as possible. Even if you're on the fence, put it on the list. We want to fix, not just full-on clichés, but tropes that are close to being clichés as well.

2. Label each Cliché

There are four types of clichés: clichés of convenience, clichés of genre & plot, clichés of character, and clichés of theme.

Clichés of convenience occur when something implausible is happening in your story.



Clichés of genre & plot occur when you're using genre or plot elements that have been used so much by other writers in your genre that they aren't that interesting anymore.

Clichés of character occur when your characters are merely flat and simplistic versions of their archetypes.

Clichés of theme occur when your story's theme feels uninspired, preachy, or simplistic.

You can't fix clichés until you know which types they fall under. So go through your handwritten list and put a label of 'Co', 'GP', 'Ch' and 'Th' next to your clichés of convenience, genre & plot, character, and theme respectively.

3. Decide which Method of Fixing Clichés You'll Use

There are three ways you can fix clichés.

1. Remove them completely from your novel by rewriting the scene, character, or plot arc to avoid that trope entirely. If you have a cliched old, wizard-like mentor in your story, consider removing him from the plot.
2. Alter them so they have the same narrative effect without being cliched. Instead of removing your mentor, rewrite him as a young orphan who has a lot more street-sense than the protagonist.
3. Deepen the story and characters so the trope actually works. Develop the old mentor figure so much that he no longer feels like a stereotype but like a real, fleshed-out, three-dimensional character.

Go through your list again, and this time think through which method you'd like to take for each cliché. Label each cliché with a 'R,' 'A,' or 'D' depending on which method you choose. Most clichés of convenience should have 'R's next for them since they aren't worth the effort to change. However, an 'A' can sometimes work as well for clichés of convenience if you can remove the convenience factor from the trope. Any other type of cliché can use one of the other three methods.

Once you have that done, you'll have a game plan for revising your manuscript.

4. Implement your Changes



Now to implement them. Go through the clichés you have and rearrange them so that you have all the clichés you’re removing at the top, all the ones you’re altering in the middle, and all the ones you’re deepening at the end. Rearrange each section so that it goes from the largest plot-and-character clichés to the smallest. Then, implement them in that order.

That way, you can deal with the largest, most time-consuming clichés that will affect the rest of your plot and characters first, before altering the small ones that won’t have much of an impact.

This step will be the longest step to take. But if you approach clichés in a logical, organized fashion you can remove them consistently from your novel.

Follow all these steps to make your book cliché-free in a painless fashion.