Word Choice

Sometimes finding the right word can be difficult. This handout identifies words that are commonly misused and explains how to use them correctly.

**Affect/Effect**
The word *effect* is usually used as a noun, as in the phrase “cause and effect.”
   E.g., The *effect* of her decision to network the computers was better communication among team members.

*Effect* can occasionally be used as a verb meaning “accomplish.”
   E.g., We plan to *effect* those changes by December.

The word *affect* is usually used as a verb.
   E.g., The attitude of management *affects* employee morale at all levels.

**As/Since**

Though British writers generally use *as* and *since* interchangeably, American writers distinguish between them.

*As* used as a conjunction connotes a contemporary time, something happening while something else is happening.
   E.g., They turned on their laptops *as* the flight took off.

*Since* gives a sense of something happening in consequence of something else.
   E.g., The flight attendant chastised the passengers using laptops *since* no electronic devices could be used until ten minutes into the flight.

**A While/Awhile**

*Awhile* is an adverb used to modify verbs.
   E.g., He stayed *awhile*.

*While* is a noun expressing an unspecified but usually short period of time. It is often the object of a preposition.
   E.g., He stayed for *a while*.

Generally, use *awhile* in the absence of a preposition, and *a while* following a preposition.