Awkward Phrasing

Purpose: Upon completion of this activity, students will understand what awkward phrasing is and how to correct awkward phrasing. This DLA should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

What makes a sentence or phrase awkward? This is a difficult error to define because it can encompass multiple errors and widely varying solutions. However, we can pinpoint a few common characteristics in awkward writing:

- The sentence or phrase contains missing, misused, or redundant words.
- The sentence structure itself is incorrect or confusing.

Obviously, this overlaps with a number of other grammatical errors, such as misplaced or dangling modifiers, redundancies, faulty parallel structure, or wordiness. Read the following paragraph to see how awkward phrasing makes it difficult for readers to understand what the author is trying to say.

Whoa! Wasn’t that difficult to understand? The paragraph above demonstrates the pitfalls of awkward, unclear writing. But here’s the challenge: Identify each of the 9 sentences as either correct (C) or awkward (AWK) and then rewrite the awkward ones. You can rewrite the whole sentence, but try to stick to what you think the author is trying to say. You may want to break up some ideas into more
than one sentence. (You may type or handwrite this, but make sure to number the sentences.)

Once you’ve completed this, discuss your corrections AND the questions on the back side of this sheet with a WRC tutor or instructor.
A) Have I sufficiently corrected the awkward phrasing in this paragraph? (I.e. Is it still awkward? Did I misinterpret what the author was probably trying to say?)

B) What is the difference between a sentence that is complex and challenging to understand, and one that is awkward?

C) When am I most likely to write awkward phrases?

D) How can I identify awkward phrasing in my own writing?

Attach a confirmation sheet or get a signature below:

Instructor Signature: _______________________________ Date: ____________________