

Writing Deskbook for Administrative Judges

An Introduction

Michael H. Frost

Paul A. Bateman

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Preface

Writing Deskbook for Administrative Judges: An Introduction provides administrative law judges (and their supervisors) with general guidelines for insuring that written decisions are of uniformly high quality and clarity. In explaining how to make decisions more readable, this book is unique in its focus on those parts of a decision that are most critical to the litigants and to reviewing tribunals. While this book is intended primarily for administrative judges, others, including agency supervisors, training officers and those with oversight responsibility may also find it useful.

The book is based on a workbook we have written and revised over the past eighteen years while conducting judicial opinion and decision writing courses for the National Judicial College and seminars for other judicial education organizations. Although the book stresses the importance of meeting readers' needs, it also approaches decision writing from the point of view of administrative law judges.

Designed as a practical guide to the decision writing process, the deskbook provides advice, guidelines and checklists for busy administrative law judges. In a few short chapters, the book

- Analyzes the rhetorical influences that affect the writing of decisions
- Identifies ways to improve the readability of administrative decisions
- Suggests organizational strategies for writing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law
- Suggests techniques for improving the organization and clarity of the decision
- Explains how document design improves readability
- Recommends time-saving and quality control strategies

Each chapter includes easy-to-follow illustrations and examples, most of which are taken from actual decisions. Some illustrations have been slightly emended to correct minor errors of grammar and style. As much as possible we have included only constructive examples. A few examples have been created by the authors.

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