Writing for Dollars,
Writing to Please
Writing for Dollars, Writing to Please
The Case for Plain Language in Business, Government, and Law

Joseph Kimble
For two boys named Axel and Jet Pierce —
and their G-Ma MaryAnn
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These pages round out a large part of a life’s work — as a teacher, speaker, and writer — campaigning for plain legal language. As noted in part 1, I’ve concentrated over the years on the writing guidelines that provide a route to clarity and simplicity, the false criticisms that stand in the way, and the mounting evidence that plain language pays off — considerably — in the end. In a sense, this book is a second edition of previous writings on those subjects. The title itself is the title of an article in volume 6 of The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing, and the title of part 3 comes from an article in volume 5 of the Journal. Parts of those two articles, and other articles as well, are incorporated in this second edition.

But the book is still new. I’ve reworked, rearranged, and updated much of the previous material. I’ve also added to it. Part 3 expands on the myths and realities. Part 4 is entirely new (and was quite an undertaking). Part 5 doubles the number of empirical studies that I reported on in earlier articles. In any case, I hope readers will like having this information all in one place.

Now, a few miscellaneous points:

- There is no index. This is not a book in which you’ll be looking up topics and names. The detailed table of contents, the extensive headings and subheadings, and the occasional introductory notes should provide plenty of orientation.
- The references generally follow legal-citation form. Thus, in “64 Clarity 5,” for example, the first number is the volume, and the second is the page. The abbreviation “J.” stands for “Journal,” “B.J.” is “Bar Journal,” and “L. Rev.” is “Law Review.” Other abbreviations in periodicals should be fairly obvious,
even to nonlegal readers. I did spell out some words that I thought might not be.

- Internet citations, URLs, are always a challenge. Besides being ugly, they come and go. But they were all last accessed in March 2012, and I printed off copies of all the shorter ones.
- Perhaps the two journals cited most often are *Clarity* and the *Michigan Bar Journal* (which publishes the “Plain Language” column). You can find most of those articles by running a Google search for “Clarity International” or “Plain Language Column.” I’ve also added “available at” URLs to many of the citations, especially when it might not be obvious where to find an electronic version if there is one.
- I have copies of everything cited in the footnotes. If you need an item and can’t get it, I’ll try to send it to you on request (unless it’s a book).
- As a small concession to international preferences, I used periods with “U.S.” but not “UK” or “EU.”
- The book is not flooded with before-and-after examples. Short ones appear in appropriate places, and you can find longer ones to your heart’s content through the references — like those on page 5, note 1. There’s little justification these days for professing ignorance about what plain language looks like or for claiming that it can’t be done.

Four Thomas Cooley Law School graduates — Robert Webb, Kelly Stewart, Thomas Myers, and Rachel Glogowski — each spent loads of time helping with different aspects of this book. Their work was superb, and I’m heavily in their debt.

I owe others as well. Three readers — Annetta Cheek, Martin Cutts, and David Schultz — reviewed the entire
manuscript and had valuable comments on page after page. Others read and greatly improved parts of the book: Joseph Spaniol, Robert Eagleson, Michèle Asprey, Ginny Redish, Karen Schriver, and Mark Cooney. Matthew Butterick offered many suggestions that sharpened the typography. And Karen Magnuson did her usual peerless job of copyediting. To all these friends and colleagues, my heartfelt thank-you for your contributions.

Finally, a word of thanks to Cindy Hurst, my assistant for more than 25 years. She keeps the work on track — with greater equanimity than I deserve.
PREFACE