

Plain English for Lawyers

Plain English for Lawyers

SEVENTH EDITION

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To JJW, with love

A. E. S.

To MM, ACMS, and JWMS, with love

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Preface and Acknowledgments, Seventh Edition

Richard Wydick made *Plain English for Lawyers* a classic book for teaching clear legal writing. After Professor Wydick passed away in 2016, I was honored to continue his work with *Plain English for Lawyers*, and I have endeavored to carry on his legacy with the seventh edition.

My goal with the seventh edition is to maintain Professor Wydick's vision of offering a concise, practical guide to clear legal writing. This edition retains the earlier editions' essential character while including timely changes to keep it relevant to the writing challenges lawyers and law students face today. It contains practical advice and exercises, making it an excellent choice as an instructional text, writing supplement, or resource for self-directed efforts to improve your writing.

Plain English principles and usage conventions typically do not change overnight. They evolve over time, which requires periodic evaluation of the best ways to make our meaning clear to readers. One area of rapid change, however, is the advent of artificial intelligence tools that produce text. The more technology automates writing tasks, the more we must use plain-English principles to make sure the text says what we mean to say in the clearest way possible. Toward that end, the seventh edition include a new chapter on using AI text generation tools wisely.

Along with the new chapter, classic features from prior editions remain in the book. These include chapters on omitting surplus words, using verbs to express action, and favoring active voice, along with material on word choice and placement, punctuation, and document design. Although the techniques covered in the book apply in almost any writing context, the book focuses more on strategies for analytical and descriptive writing than on those uniquely suited to transactional or legislative drafting.

Each chapter contains exercises students can use for self-assessment by comparing their answers with the answer key in the book's Appendix. The chapters on punctuation include short exercises for each rule addressed, along with a comprehensive exercise at the end of each chapter.

Clear writing is a skill that can be learned. It isn't easy, but with instruction and practice, anyone can learn to be a better writer. *Plain English for Lawyers* is a tool for learning and practicing techniques for clear legal writing.

The seventh edition would not have been possible without the help of many people. I am indebted to Kirsten K. Davis, Mark Cooney, and Richard Luedeman for their feedback. Megan Crawford provided research support. Dean Ronald Weich and the University of Baltimore School of Law generously supported this project. Many people at Carolina Academic Press were instrumental in the revision, including Linda Lacy and Carol McGeehan. My family was the source of ongoing encouragement and inspiration.

The seventh edition builds on the sixth edition, and I continue to be grateful to the people who helped with the prior edition: Linda Edwards, Eric Easton, Dionne Koller, Kathleen Elliott Vinson, Derek Kiernan-Johnson, James Beslity, Adeen Postar, Joanne Colvin, and Geneieve Hornik.

I would be remiss if I failed to recognize the people who helped and inspired Professor Wydick in his work on earlier editions of the book, especially the late David Mellinkoff, as well as Kenneth Adams, Mark Adler, Robert Benson, Norman Brand, Robert Chaim, Robert Charrow, Veda Charrow, Martin Cutts, Robert Eagleson,

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And of course, I extend special thanks to the Wydick family, particularly Professor Bruce Wydick, for the opportunity to work on the book.

Amy E. Sloan
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