

Clear and Concise Writing for Lawyers



Presented by: Ryan Standil, Owner of Write To Excite

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Session 1 – Clarity in Legal Writing: Five Techniques to Avoid Ambiguity

In the first module of this program, we will cover five techniques to avoid ambiguity. By applying these techniques, you will ensure that your readers can clearly understand your legal writing, even when your files are complex.

Throughout this engaging module, the instructor will display before-and-after examples of legal writing that demonstrate the five techniques for achieving clarity. When displaying the “before versions”, the instructor will challenge you to identify why each writing example is ambiguous *before* he shows how to eliminate the confusion.

Key Takeaways:

Upon completing this module, you will be able to:

- Explain legal concepts using language that is easy to understand.
- Identify misplaced modifiers and ambiguous references.
- Decide when to repeat a term versus when to use a synonym.
- Determine when to use (and when to avoid) the word “and”.

Specific Example:

Consider the following sentence:

“I am teaching a course about writing clearly to associate lawyers.”

- How should that sentence be interpreted? If you look closely, there are two reasonable alternatives.
 - Alternative 1: I am teaching a course about writing clearly, and my attendees are associate lawyers.
 - Alternative 2: I am teaching a course about writing clearly, and my attendees are *people who have to write to* associate lawyers (and must do so in a clear fashion, e.g., partners providing instructions or articling students drafting research memos).

2:10 – 3:15 p.m.

Session 2 – Email Best Practices

In the second module of this program, we will cover important concepts relating to email communication for legal professionals. By mastering email best practices, you will establish a reputation for sending user-friendly correspondence, which will cause your clients and supervising lawyers to open your messages quickly rather than put them off.

The overarching theme of this module is *drafting emails that are easy for your readers to respond to*.

Concurrently, this module specifically addresses ten email topics:

1. Email length
2. Tailoring to your reader
3. Response time
4. Subject lines
5. Pleasantries, e.g., “I hope all is well.”
6. Copying – Reply or Reply All?
7. Following up
8. Email vs. oral communication
9. Formality
10. Tone

Key Takeaways:

Upon completing this module, you will be able to:

- Write in a style that is both professional and courteous.
- Obey the etiquette of email communication.
- Adapt your level of formality depending on the audience.
- Elicit faster responses from clients and team members.

Specific Examples:

The following are examples of three specific questions that we will explore during this module:

- For busy professionals, is “24 hours” still considered the standard response time?
- Are there better pleasantries than the generic “I hope this email finds you well”?
- What are tactful approaches for following up with an email correspondent who has not replied to your previous message?

3:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Q&A

About the Presenter

Ryan Standil practised law until 2015, at which point he became a legal-writing instructor. For the past 10 years, Ryan has owned and operated Write To Excite, a company that provides legal-writing seminars at law firms and through law societies.

In Ryan's local province of Ontario, he is the legal-writing instructor for the Law Society of Ontario.

In addition to speaking engagements at home, Ryan has been invited to speak at organizations such as the Tennessee Bar Association, the Oregon State Bar, the State Bar of Georgia, the Alaska Bar Association, the Law Society of Saskatchewan, CLEBC, the American Bar Association, and Lawline.

Over the years, Ryan has taught legal writing to thousands of lawyers and legal support staff. Ryan is relied upon by major Toronto law firms to train their associate lawyers, through group workshops and individual coaching.

CPD Hours

This session qualifies for 2.25 CPD hours.

If the presentation and Q&A should run longer than 2 hours and 15 minutes, please round up to the nearest quarter when entering your CPD hours.

The break is not included in the calculation.