



13 Ways to Become a Better Legal Writer

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1: Take ownership of your learning path.*

The shortage of true “teachers” in law firms has exacerbated the trend to fewer 1:1 training experiences in legal writing.

Most lawyers lack the skill or desire to teach, and client demands often mean there’s no time anyway.

So if you want to become a better legal writer, you must be ***proactive!***

2: Take a humble pill.*

You must remember that for as many years as you've been writing in school, as a junior lawyer, you are a NEWBIE when it comes to legal writing.

Accept that reality in advance, and don't have a humble attitude about your legal writing skills.

You should be willing to ask basic questions, make mistakes, and learn foundational principles without embarrassment.

3: Commit to an attitude of gratitude.*

The earlier you start taking all feedback as a gift, the faster you'll improve. Every comment (whether praise or critique) offers insight into how you can improve.

You should thus feel and show genuine appreciation for any time and input you get from a senior lawyer. Doing so not only builds goodwill but also encourages more helpful feedback in the future.

4: Grow a thick skin.*

Legal writing is often subject to detailed, sometimes blunt, feedback. But please don't take the critique personally.

You need to separate your writing from your identity.

While it's natural to feel defensive about your work, defensiveness will abruptly halt your improvement.

5: Learn from the best writers.

Study the best to raise your bar. The fastest way to improve your legal writing is to immerse yourself in first-rate examples.

—Read briefs, opinions & articles by esteemed legal writers to absorb their rhythm, tone, and command of structure.

—Mark what makes them effective—transitions, logical scaffolds, word choice.

Then you'll want to start incorporating what you've seen into your own writing.

6: Become an active reader.

The key difference between reading passively and reading actively is attention. Active reading means dissecting what you see on the page.

--When something flows beautifully, stop and figure out why.

--Mark passages that strike you as clear or compelling and jot quick notes in the margin about what works.

Then try imitating those stylistic moves in your own drafts.

7. Read about legal writing.

Invest in some book on legal writing itself.

There are a ton out there, and I must have consumed about 50 while creating my own book. I have whittled them down to just 3 for you to read (in order of beginner to advanced):

1- “Dear 1L: Notes to Nurture a New Legal Writer” (Haverstick)

2- “Legal Writing in Plain English” (Garner)

3- “Point Made” (Guberman)

These 3 will give you the most bang for your buck, in terms of time.

8. Become an active writer.

You will learn legal writing best by “doing” legal writing.

- In the process, instead of reworking a sentence to avoid words or phrases you’re not sure how to use, spell, or punctuate, start looking up how.
- Whenever you revise, ask yourself *why* you are choosing one phrasing over another.
- Eventually, you’ll start using what you’ve learned naturally, without even thinking about it.

9. Write about what you learn.

Reflection cements learning. After each writing assignment or round of feedback, summarize what you discovered—about structure, argument, word choice, or tone.

Use a “learning log” or digital note library where you capture lessons, model examples, and before-and-after edits.

This file can become your personalized writing manual—something you can revisit again and again.

It’s remarkable how much faster progress comes once you’re tracking and naming your growth.

10. Teach what you learn

The truth is, you never really understand something fully until you try to explain it to someone else.

They will ask questions, expose gaps in your thinking, and help you hone what you think you know.

What begins as a favor to a friend quickly becomes one of the most effective self-teaching tools available to you.

11. Get savvy with tech.

You can't be an effective legal writer today if you're not comfortable with technology.

Learn the ins and outs of core programs like Microsoft Word, including formatting, track changes, and styles. The more competent you are with your tools, the more space you free up to focus on sound legal reasoning and clear expression.

You also have no choice but to stay on the cutting edge of all the new AI tools and the ethical rules for using AI for legal writing.

Learn from recent articles and LinkedIn posts by Joe Regalia, Ross Guberman, Laura Frederick, and Heidi Brown, among others.

12. Take online writing courses.

You can learn legal writing online. Try:

- Joe Reglia's Write.law
- Ross Guberman's Briefcatch
- Bryan Garner's taped lecture series

Even general writing apps like Grammarly can give you guided practice at your own pace.

13. Work with a coach.

OK, this last one's admittedly self-serving, but it can be key—especially to get you started in a personalized, fun, and judgment-free way.

- 👉 Instead of guessing what to fix, you get targeted, personalized guidance from someone who's already mastered the path.
- 👉 I can identify patterns you can't see, give real-time feedback on tone and organization, and offer practical tricks to increase confidence and clarity.

Conclusion

By taking the initiative, you can make great strides to becoming a great writer even without any help from your firm.

Let's make this the year YOU become a better writer!

 Amanda

Additional resources available at

Dear1L.com