

Why I Wrote This Book

“The best legal writers are not born; they are made.”¹

When I was a law student, legal writing was simultaneously new and frustratingly familiar. Sometimes it felt like college essays and high school reports. Sometimes it felt like I was learning a new language, and a weird one at that. Many of my fellow law students felt the same.

And it's not just law students. When I became a lawyer, I constantly heard others complain, law school long behind them, that they “didn't know how to write.” They stared at a blank page for hours, or put off their important writing until the last minute. Some dreaded writing more than anything—more than demanding clients, harsh judges, or endless billable-hour tracking.

How could this be? Most lawyering really is about the writing. The writing is how legal business gets done. The writing is how cases are argued, clients are advised, and colleagues are communicated with. The writing is how the decisions that change people's lives are made.

Shouldn't writing be what lawyers love most—their chance to put into words all the work they devote to their clients' cases? But no, it wasn't. And it isn't.

Legal writing is easily the biggest roadblock faced by law students and lawyers alike. In my work at the training company I helped found, Write.law, and as a law professor, I've supported quite a few in improving their writing craft. Some were starting their careers; others had been practicing for decades. And I hear the same things:

“I still don't really understand how to write.”

“Writing takes me forever.”

“I dread getting words on the page.”

¹ I riffed off a Stephen King quote here. His original was “I think that writers are made, not born . . . becoming a writer . . . is a direct result of conscious will.” Which is even more true for us writers of the legal persuasion.

There is a better way. I know, because at Write.law, we've helped tens of thousands of lawyers learn to love their legal writing. Assisting folks on this journey has become our mission.

Let me explain why finding a way to love your legal writing matters so much. Research paints a clear picture: the best predictors of job satisfaction and success are whether you enjoy your day-to-day work and have the skills to excel at it. Enjoying your everyday tasks at work² and getting good at the skills you need for those tasks³ makes you more productive, more creative, and influences how much you'll make and how successful you'll be.⁴

Most lawyers spend most of their time writing, whether a contract for a client or a brief for a court. So if you learn to love your legal writing and become excellent at it, you will invest more in your long-term success and happiness than just about anything else you could do.

Easier said than done, right? After all, becoming a great legal writer is hard, or at least that's what we are told. Many lawyers still struggle with basic writing principles years into their practice. Many others declare that the best legal writers are a talented few—the rare lawyer born with an ear for great prose. Troves of books are written on how to merely write competently, full of strict rules to be memorized.

But there's another path. You can improve your legal writing in weeks or months. You can become confident and no longer a victim of confusing grammar rules or arbitrary writing advice. Most importantly, you can develop your own authentic voice that connects with audiences.

I've seen it happen for lawyers around the world. After empowering them to be in the driver's seat of their legal writing, rather than a passenger, their feelings toward legal writing shift. One of my favorite clients put it simply: "For the first time, I enjoy sitting down to work on my briefs."

This book is dedicated to supporting you on that same journey. Whether you already love legal writing and want to love it even more, or you loathe putting pen to paper. This book will be a guide to enjoying your writing and a step-by-step manual for getting better at it.

²S. N. de Jesus, C. L. Rus, W. Lens, & S. Imaginário, Intrinsic Motivation and Creativity Related to Product: A Meta-analysis of the Studies Published Between 1990–2010, 25 *Creativity Res. J.* 80 (2013) (loving your work improves creative performance at work by as much as 9%).

³Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, *The Talent Delusion: Why Data, Not Intuition, Is the Key to Unlocking Human Potential* (Piatkus, 2017).

⁴Ackerman PL, *Intelligence, personality, and interests: evidence for overlapping traits*, *Psychol Bull.* (1997).