



Clear and Concise Legal Writing With Help From The Experts

On January 26, 2022, Attorney Protective and Scribes, the American Society of Legal Writers, will present a national webinar offering tips on effective legal writing. But why wait for all of these pointers, when you can get a sneak preview right here? Consider what this all-star panel has to say about some of the following topics:

BE CONCISE

French philosopher Blaise Pascal once famously apologized to a friend for the length of a letter, saying "I would have written a shorter letter, but I did not have the time." Cutting excess and distilling your message to the core takes care and effort.

Panelist Wallace Jefferson: "Spend the time necessary to use fewer words," and "Eliminate facts that do not contribute to answering the questions presented."

Panelist Allyson Ho: "Distill your arguments and themes to their essentials by including a short statement up front... and trim your work to make reading it as painless as possible for busy readers like judges, law clerks, and reporters."

WRITE WITH YOUR AUDIENCE IN MIND

Moderator Darby Dickerson: "You're writing for an audience not yourself. As you draft and edit, consider what the primary reader will find most helpful to understand your message. Would the reader appreciate bulleted points or shorter paragraphs than you might prefer? Would hyperlinked sources help the reader? Would the reader appreciate you removing legalese, and hominem attacks, and other snarky phrases? Would the reader appreciate roadmaps and more headings?"

Panelist Wallace Jefferson: "Write so that the judge resolving your case can use your structure and substance as the basis for an order or opinion."

Panelist Allyson Ho: "Provide context...and use short paragraphs and headers to make it as easy as possible for the reader to digest your arguments."

BE SURE TO PROOFREAD, AND EDIT YOUR WORK

Panelist Wallace Jefferson: "Edit, edit, edit. Make your prose interesting so that your audience wants to read the next sentence and paragraph."

Panelist Allyson Ho: "Learn the value in not over-chronicling."

Moderator Darby Dickerson: "Be consistent. Use consistent terminology and formatting. Then check for consistency. If you make one mistake consistently, most readers will assume that you misunderstood a single rule, not that you were careless in preparing the document. But a lot of sloppy mistakes signals a lack of care and can detract from your main points."

Be sure to tune in January 26, 2022 to learn even more pointers from our distinguished panelists. And if good legal writing matters to you, and if you'd like access to even more valuable tips, consider joining Scribes by visiting www.scribes.org.