

THE BRIEFING ROOM

LEGAL WRITING NEWSLETTER

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Writing Tips From the Simpsons

The Simpsons can teach good writing by demonstrating the importance of well-rounded characters, strong dialogue, layered themes, precise pacing, and structure. It's an excellent example of how humor, when combined with thoughtful storytelling, can not only entertain but also provoke thought and emotion. Sometimes the grammatical jokes hit home as well! Here are a few examples:

Season 23, Episode 6: "The Book Job"

This episode features a vignette of Lisa's preconceived notions of who an author is and what the writing process entails. She does everything but write. The writing process is unique for everyone, but what works for most is some systems based or design based

approach. As applied to Hellmuth & Johnson's system's driven approach, sometimes the best thing to do is just get the words out. Don't worry about optimizing or getting it right. Write instead, and rewrite later.

Season 12, Episode 18: "Trilogy of Error"

This episode is a masterclass of story writing that features three distinct storylines. Lisa's storyline involves a robot named "Linguo" who corrects grammar. At the start, Homer tests Linguo out by stating "Me Like Beer" to which Linguo replies "I like beer". Homer then pours beer down Linguo's throat, breaking it, after misunderstanding him.

It's a good lesson that sometimes even plain language can be misunderstood if it is grammatically incorrect. It's also an important reminder to write for your audience. Certain styles are lost on audiences and you must cater your writing!

Season 7, Episode 20: "Bart on the Road"

This episode features an "airtight and utterly plausible alibi" that Bart writes for his classmates so they can get permission to go on a trip. Each character presents the alibi in a different way, but all are successful. It's an important lesson that even with a consistent and "airtight" document, you need to make sure it is catered to your audience. Nelson doesn't even read the alibi to his parents, he just says he is going away for a week. Knowing your reader is powerful information.

Clear, Concise, and Plain Language Can Transform Your Legal Writing

Imagine this scenario: You're reading a legal brief filled with jargon, complex sentence structures, and dense paragraphs. It's difficult to understand, and soon, you're frustrated by the lack of clarity rather than focusing on the merits of the case. Now, picture that same brief rewritten in straightforward, accessible language. Suddenly, the argument becomes compelling, easy to follow, and, most importantly, effective. This is the power of clear and plain language in legal writing.

Here's why using plain language should be a priority in your legal documents:

→ Speed Up Comprehension:

When legal writing is clear and simple, the message is much easier for the reader to grasp. Judges, clients, and other readers often have limited time to process complex information. By simplifying your language, you enable your audience to understand your points quickly, without having to decode technical terms or convoluted sentences. This efficiency is crucial in fast-paced legal environments where time is of the essence.

→ Reduce Misunderstandings:

One of the biggest risks of using complex, jargon-heavy language is that it can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Legal language is already intricate enough without adding layers of ambiguity. By using plain language, you reduce the chances that key points will be misread or misconstrued, ensuring that your message is clear, precise, and accurate. This leads to better outcomes for your clients and greater confidence in your work.



→ Enhance Persuasion:

Persuasive legal arguments are not just about presenting facts; they're about presenting those facts in a way that is easy for your audience to understand and engage with. When your arguments are clearly stated, they become more compelling. A well-structured, straightforward argument is harder to ignore than one buried in complicated terminology. Clarity in writing gives your argument the power to resonate with judges, opposing counsel, and clients alike.

→ Improve Accessibility:

Not everyone who reads a legal document is a lawyer. Clients, witnesses, and even some court staff may not have a legal background, yet they still need to understand the content of your documents. Using plain language makes legal writing more accessible to a broader audience, ensuring that everyone who interacts with your documents can follow your reasoning and make informed decisions.

→ Build Trust with Clients:

Legal clients often feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the law. They rely on

you to explain their case in a way that is understandable and reassuring. Writing in plain language shows clients that you value their comprehension and want them to feel informed and empowered. Clear communication builds trust and fosters stronger client relationships, as clients are more likely to feel confident in a lawyer who can explain things transparently.

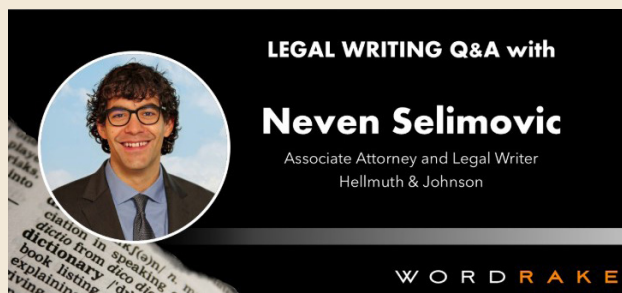
→ Facilitate Better Decision-Making:

In legal matters, decisions must be made based on the facts and information presented. The clearer the information, the easier it is for clients, judges, and opposing parties to make informed decisions. Plain language allows for better decision-making because it removes barriers to understanding and helps the audience focus on the key issues at hand.

At **Hellmuth & Johnson**, we are committed to ensuring that our legal writing is not only effective but also clear and accessible. We understand that a well-structured, straightforward legal document can be the difference between a successful outcome and one that falls short of expectations. Our goal is to present our clients' cases in a way that resonates—making our arguments clear to judges, persuasive to opposing parties, and easy for clients to follow.

Need help transforming your legal documents into clear, powerful, plain-language communications?

If you want your message to be heard loud and clear, let's collaborate. We specialize in taking complex legal information and turning it into writing that anyone can understand. [Contact us today](#), and let us help you communicate with clarity and confidence.



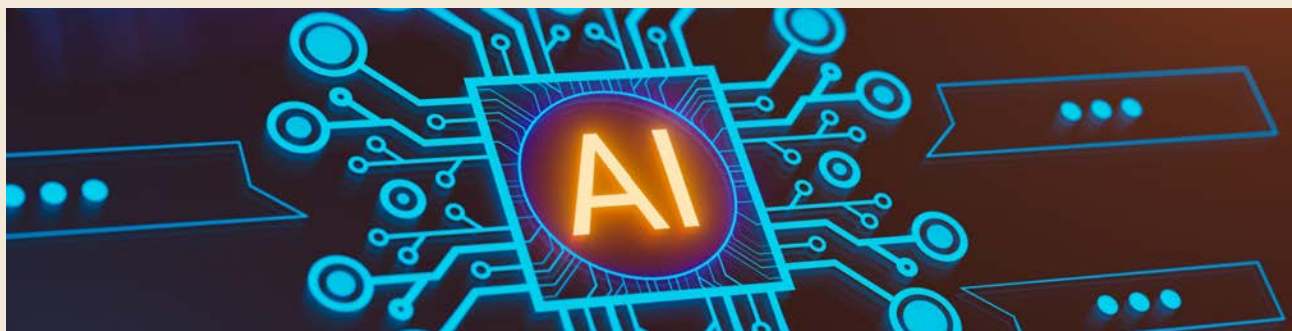
Neven Interviewed by WordRake

Neven shares his legal writing process with [WordRake](#). WordRake offers software to make any document “clearer, shorter, and better.” Their mission is “to help professional write clearly and concisely. His interview can be found [here](#).



Brendan Discusses in Minnesota Lawyer What Lawyers Need to Know About Electronic Evidence

Brendan was recently published [Minnesota Lawyer](#). His article “Exemplary Evidence: What you don’t know about digital forensics will hurt you,” discusses potential pitfalls that can arise when lawyers lack a deep understanding of digital forensics, and how attorneys can effectively leverage their digital forensic investigator’s subject-matter expertise. His article can be read [here](#).



Monthly A.I. Image Prompts

Here are some image prompts to play with. Put them in your favorite AI-image generator and modify them to your heart's content. Share your interesting images in the comments.

- Prompt: An endless library with books that float to readers on command, overseen by a legal-writing attorney
- Prompt: A CG cartoon scene of 3 attorneys sitting at a table in a law office working on a legal writing project together, 8k Pixar animation, funny and whimsical in a Disney animation style
- Prompt: "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep (1968)" re-imagined as Campy Low-Budget 1970s Sci-Fi TV Show, with main character "Rick Deckard" and an ensemble cast as idealistic legal-writing attorneys dedicated to their mission of catching replicants disguised as nefarious attorneys
- Prompt: "Memento (2000)" movie re-imagined as a Campy Low-Budget 1970s drama TV Show telling tragic story of doomed legal-writing attorney trying to find his missing legal brief, Impressionistic, Retro Vintage Style

Monthly A.I. Litigation Prompts

- I am a [type of lawyer] lawyer in [state] representing [describe your client and their situation]. Plaintiff alleges that [fill in detailed allegations]. Plaintiff's complaint contains claims for [include causes of action]. Defendant argues [include your affirmative defenses and Based on what I wrote above, and on the attached information [copy and paste substance of complaint, with client-specific information removed], please draft Defendant's answer, including affirmative defenses, that cover the most important legal and factual issues in this case.

5 Cool (and Not Necessarily New) Tech Tools and Recommends

1. Subscribe to [Superhuman AI](#) newsletter
2. Use [Argdown](#), "A simple system for complex argumentation"
3. [PromptPerfect](#) for prompt generation
4. [TTSReader](#), free online text-to-speech reader
5. Superhuman AI [Tool Vault](#)



Podcast/Media of the Month

- [Legaltech Week](#) (11/1/24): the \$2,000 paralegal; NY rules on admissibility of AI evidence, startup alley nominations, and more
- [The Agile Attorney](#) (10/3/24): 037. Putting the 'Flow' Back into Workflow
- [Lawyerist Podcast](#) (10/31/24): The Hidden Power of Technology for Midsize Firms, with Ari Kaplan

Giving Thanks

As legal professionals, we have a lot to be thankful for. From The Briefing Room, we are thankful to have the opportunity to be legal writers. Let us know what you're thankful for!





Want more insights?

Follow us on LinkedIn for monthly tips, or contact us to discuss how we could help your law practice.

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