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Expanded Contents

PART I STYLE

1. Core Principles of Legal Writing	5
1.1. Adopt a growth mindset.	5
1.2. Commit to improving your writing skills.	7
1.3. Aim to write prose that is clear, readable, and efficient.	9
1.4. Learn the principles of readability.	10
1.5. Distinguish rules from guidelines.	11
1.6. Balance competing values in writing tasks.	12
1.7. Include only relevant details and put them in context.	13
1.8. Motivate readers by showing how your document will help them.	14
1.9. Think like a teacher.	14
1.10. Avoid common audience-related mistakes.	15
2. Concision	16
2.1. Omit throat-clearing introductory phrases.	17
2.2. Delete unnecessary modifiers, especially intensifiers.	18

2.3.	Avoid overspecification and synonym strings.	22
2.4.	Avoid doublets and triplets.	23
2.5.	Condense bloated phrases.	24
3.	Plain Language	28
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3.3.	Avoid legalese and ritual phrases.	30
3.4.	Prefer concrete, specific nouns. Minimize vagueness.	33
3.5.	Prefer English terms to foreign terms.	35
3.6.	Minimize hedging.	35
3.7.	Use contractions when appropriate.	36
3.8.	Avoid clichés.	37
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3.10.	Avoid gendered language.	40
4.	Strong Sentences	43
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4.2.	Give your prose a sense of forward movement.	45
4.3.	Move quickly to the heart of a sentence.	45
4.4.	Write sentences about characters performing actions.	47
4.5.	Use verbs, not nouns, to say what happened.	48
4.6.	Write most sentences in active voice.	51
4.7.	Minimize prepositional phrases.	52
4.8.	Keep the subject and verb together near the start of the sentence.	53
4.9.	Don't interrupt sentences with citations.	54
4.10.	Avoid ambiguous references.	54
4.11.	Keep modifiers near what they modify.	55
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4.18.	Monitor your sentences' emphasis.	67
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