

[Plain Language Legal Writing](#), by Cheryl Stephens, is a complete guide to clean, precise and understandable legal writing.

Starting with the basics of plain language and why it matters, the book immediately delves into the art of thinking, and how your thinking is reflected in your writing.

Thinking is the first step in communicating. Successful writers devote the major portion of their time to the thinking or incubation stage because it is in this stage that you discover what your real message is.

Rather than simply give advice like "know your audience" and "structure your writing," Stevens provides clear instructions on how to accomplish what she's recommending. Instead of just telling you to plan what you're going to write, she walks you step-by-step through the planning. Instead of telling you to consider your audience before writing, she describes in detail the sorts of audiences a legal document might have and how to best meet their needs.

The book is divided into four parts. Part one, about writing and communication, really focuses on clarity. Chapters cover planning, research, organization, and critique, all with the reader in mind. Part two is about the writing itself, putting together sentences and paragraphs. One amusing chapter covers the horrors of traditional legal writing, and how you can avoid them. Part three covers the practicalities, formats for specific types of legal documents including memorandums and letters of opinion. It also gives pointers on how to give bad news, and how to visually present information for the best reception. Lastly, part four offers resources and references for further learning.

[Plain Language Legal Writing](#) will help you produce documents that people are willing to read and able to understand.