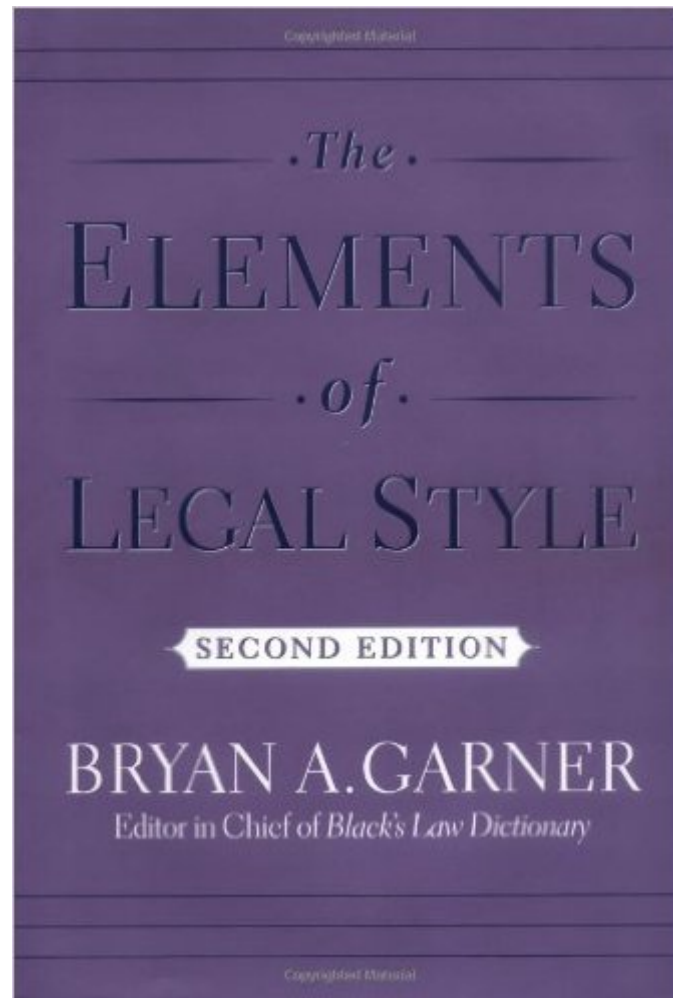


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# The Elements Of Legal Style



## Synopsis

With expanded coverage in this new edition, *The Elements of Legal Style* features additional sections, many more examples, and a thoroughly researched appendix that contains 80 major statements on prose style--what it is and how to attain it. Inspired by Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, this book clearly (often wittily) explains the full range of what legal writers need to know: mechanics, word choice, structure, and rhetoric, as well as all the special conventions that legal writers should follow in using headings, defined terms, quotations, and many other devices. Garner also provides abundant examples from the best legal writers of yesterday and today, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, Clarence Darrow, Frank Easterbrook, and Antonin Scalia. If you want to make your writing clearer, more precise, more persuasive, and above all more stylish, *The Elements of Legal Style* offers the surest--and the most enjoyable--means to that end.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This review is of the Second Edition, published in 2002. This book takes an intelligent, thoughtful, and somewhat scholarly approach to legal-writing style, yet it is still readable and practical. Garner presents good writing advice, with examples of how to do it taken from the great legal writers: Holmes, Cardozo, Llewellyn, and others. And the coverage is broad: from punctuation to citation; from commonly-misused words to rhetorical devices for persuasion. The book covers enough basics to reward the novice, but it can take the experienced writer farther than other legal-writing books.

I bought this book in 1994 or so, and try to read it every year as a refresher course. You can read the entire book (skimming the examples) in a long weekend. Doing that will immeasurably improve the coherence and power of your writing. This book has helped me. The examples are clear and relevant and relatively easy to use in your own writing. Garner has a real gift and this early book was just the first sign of his abilities. Enjoy!

My first Garner book was "The Winning Brief," purchased as I was preparing for an ultimately successful fight against a speeding ticket, and I was instantly taken by his clear and informative style. This book continues that trend. Garner is an exceptional writer, and even the best of writers, legal or otherwise, can learn a great deal from this book.

Perhaps because Garner's major work, "A Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage," has received so much attention, this little book is often overlooked. This is unfortunate because "The Elements of Legal Style" is an outstanding resource and it is probably more accessible and more useful to the working lawyer than "A Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage." As Professor Wright indicates in his incisive Forward, "anyone, no matter how good a writer, will find much that is useful in the book." This book should be in the library of every lawyer and judge. Highly recommended.

As a great admirer of Prof. Garner's other works, I was very disappointed by this volume. It provides little advice that cannot be found, in equally brief form, in any number of "general" writing guides already on the market. I believe lawyers and law students would be better served by buying, first, Garner's *\*Modern Legal Usage\** (a true masterpiece) and reading the essays on general stylistic topics in that excellent volume. If one has additional money and time, Garner's "Winning Brief" would be a wise second purchase. [Note: This review, originally written several years ago, was of the first edition of Prof. Garner's *\*Elements\**. The second edition appears to be much improved over the first.]

I read a review where someone said they read this and it got them on the law review. That was what I was looking for, so I bought it and the same thing happened to me (which is incredible considering my grades). This book gave me the tools to express what I want to say without trying to cram everything into one sentence. Somehow, after reading this book, I felt much less inhibited about my writing and more confident that I was using correct grammar, sentence structure, etc. Now that I

think about it I'd like to read it again. I'd highly recommend this to someone who wants to write legal papers that are actually readable and have some style.

First introduced to Bryan A. Garner at one of his brief writing seminar, several years ago, I have since been a loyal reader of his works. This book is (1) a reference book, (2) an invaluable resource, (3) more than just a grammar or style book ever thought of being, (4) chocked full of historical information and legal literary quotes, (5) presented in a humorous and accessible manner, and (6) the standard to which all legal writers should aspire. Poor writing and the use of legalese have always been bug-a-boos of mine. And, over the lifetime of my legal practice, having to slave over thousands of statutes, briefs, decisions, motions, etc., has only intensified my belief that too few lawyers know how to write well, and that the legal profession should abolish the use of legalese from the practice of law. In Mr. Garner, I have found a champion. In "The Elements of Legal Style", writers wishing to take their craft beyond the stars will find a valuable cache of information that will lay the foundations to improve their writing and persuading skills. He shows you how to remove the legalese from your writing, how to make your writing dynamic and exciting, and how to use your writing to better persuade. This book, along with "The Winning Brief", should be the foundation of your arsenal of writing tools.

Despite the fact that many attorneys spend much of their time writing motions, briefs, memos and such with the intent of writing clearly and persuasively, most attorneys fail miserably at doing so. Many judges, the very people the attorneys are attempting to persuade complain of how terribly most attorneys write. Now we have Bryan Garner to the rescue. If you don't know about Bryan, he is one of the preeminent legal scholars on the subject of writing clearly and persuasively. Bryan helps attorneys cut through the clutter of legalese, organize their arguments, and, ultimately, draft documents that often will win their argument solely on the basis of the fact that the Judge can at least read and understand the message. Law students can also benefit from the information found in this book. I would even recommend it for the average layperson who wishes to represent their self in court or who simply wants to write more clearly and directly. Every lawyer should have this book on their shelf and follow its advice religiously. This book may very well be the "bible" of legal writing.

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