

Effective contract drafting and legal writing in English

Example outline from our two-day public course (face-to-face)

We tailor content and course length for in-house groups and one-to-ones

Currently all training live online

This practical, interactive workshop will help you to draft and write confidently and effectively in English, whatever the governing law. You will develop your skills and revise some grammar and language so that your drafting and writing is clearer, more accurate and precise. You will benefit from trainer monitoring throughout and, after the course, you will be able to develop your skills with the help of our written guidelines and checklists.

(Note, participants often tell us this course helps them draft better in their own language!)

Course length

12 training hours (originally a two-day face-to-face course). See online method below.

Who should attend

Lawyers from private practice, industry and government

Minimum level of general English

At least a B2 (European Council reference for language levels.) We will assess your level.

Group size

Preferred maximum 12, but please discuss higher numbers with us.

Trainers

Stella Styllis and Alan Simmons

Method for online training

Pre-course assessments so we can tailor the course to needs

Split into sessions of up to two hours each

Zoom preferred but can use similar platforms

Trainer monitoring and input throughout for maximum individual attention and benefit.

Work in ones, twos and threes in breakout rooms – screen-sharing and joint document annotating.

Homework (brief) between sessions

Effective contract drafting and legal writing in English, continued

By completing the course, you will:

- become familiar with and practise using guidelines for clear, precise drafting and writing
- increase your awareness of your own and common issues on drafting, writing and language
- improve your ability to assess and use precedent clauses
- gain a basis for drafting clauses simply from scratch
- revise and improve some grammar and legal English

What we will cover on contract drafting

1. Objectives and general ways of achieving clarity and precision in English: meeting your purpose and writing for your readers
2. Brief review of problems that arise (a) when English is not the first language, and (b) Common Law does not apply
3. Guidelines, including relating to the following:
 - structuring the document, a clause, a paragraph and a sentence
 - getting to the point and positioning information, including signposting, “if” clauses, and emphasis
 - ensuring completeness of content and language
 - keeping it short and simple, including addressing archaisms, verbal clutter, word order, active voice and passive voice, and abstract writing with nouns
 - dealing simply with provisos and exceptions, and minimising cross-referencing; the related language (*provided that, subject to, notwithstanding*)
 - choosing, and using, language of obligation and discretion: *shall, will, must, and may*
 - avoiding ambiguity

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4. Exercises on analysing style, and redrafting poorly drafted precedent clauses.
5. Exercises on drafting from scratch.
6. Exercises on grammar in a legal context (as a break from intensive drafting), eg on prepositions, and on collocations
7. Some comparisons between US and English terminology

What we will cover on legal writing

1. Legal writing content
 - Planning and ordering information in the whole document, the paragraph and the sentence, for flow, impact and to meet reader expectations
 - Adjusting formality; avoiding clichés
 - Keeping it short and simple reviewing objectives: writing for the reader and achieving the purpose
 - Comparing the English approach with the approach of law firms in participants' jurisdictions
 - Applying and adding to guidelines learnt on day one
2. Exercises analysing and redrafting poorly drafted letters or extracts from reports
3. Exercises on relevant grammar in a legal context, including to address issues arising from feedback and from pre-course assessments, and other exercises on punctuation, proofreading and spelling
4. Exercises on writing from scratch: letter or part report

Group and trainer feedback, including remedial grammar and language.