The Elements of Legal Style

By Bryan A. Garner

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When Bryan A. Garner's award-winning *Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage* appeared in 1987, it was widely acclaimed throughout the English-speaking world. Just in the U.S., *Harvard Law Review* called it "an authoritative guide" that "all legal writers will find...invaluable." *ABA Journal* hailed it as "a work of learning, taste, care, and wit"; and the *Michigan Bar Journal* called it "a landmark reference." Garner modeled that volume after Fowler's venerable *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. Now he has written a new writing guide, this one inspired by Strunk & White's classic book, *The Elements of Style*.
Like the Strunk & White book, *The Elements of Legal Style* offers authoritative, down-to-earth, and often witty advice on a broad array of writing concerns, from basic grammatical rules to enhancing clarity, force, and persuasiveness. Unlike Strunk & White, it is written for lawyers, law students, judges and their law clerks--for anyone who writes in and about the law. With broad experience as a practitioner, academic, and writing consultant, Garner knows first hand where legal writing goes wrong, and he pays particular attention to these trouble spots. He not only reveals how and why lawyers spill their words vervbosely, he also memorably shows how lawyers can clean up their spills. In a section on commonly misused words in law, Garner crisply guides readers through the hazards of legal wordchoice. Throughout the book, Garner draws on splendid and not-so-splendid examples of legal prose to illustrate his points, quoting such eminenences as Justice Holmes, Clarence Darrow, William Prosser, Fred Rodell, Ronald Dworkin, Laurence H. Tribe, and Justice Scalia.
Fred Rodell, the Yale law professor, once wrote that "90 per cent of American scholars and at least 99.44 per cent of American legal scholars not only do not know how to write simply; they do not know how to write." Rodell exaggerated for comic effect, of course, but legal writing certainly needs improvement. In *The Elements of Legal Style*, Bryan Garner shows the way.

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About the Author

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Bryan A. Garner is the president of LawProse, Inc., a Dallas firm that teaches lawyers how to improve their writing. He is internationally renowned as the author of *A Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage* (Oxford, 1987) and is now at work on a book on legal drafting. Mr. Garner has taught advanced seminars in Legal Editing and Language of the Law at The University of Texas School of Law and Southern Methodist University School of Law. He has lectured throughout the country, as well as abroad, on legal language and writing. Mr. Garner is editor-in-chief of *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing* and chairs the Plain-Language Committee of the State Bar of Texas.

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