

Pleasing the Court

Legal Writing:
Precision and Persuasion

What do judges want?

Justice Richard Gabriel's [suggestions](#) are consistent with those of many judges.

Some courts tell you in writing.

The North Dakota Supreme Court makes some [reasonable requests](#).

Ten repeated requests

- Use plainer English.
- Avoid jargon.
- Start strong.
- Spell it out.
- Skip unnecessary formalisms.

Ten repeated requests

- Make it accessible.
- Omit attacks.
- Organize methodically.
- Edit rigorously.
- Follow local rules.

Use plainer English.

“Be plain. Write in plain English. Too many lawyers seem to take a perverse pride in being as stuffy and dense as possible. Their prose has about as much snap as tapioca. Interminable sentences composed of immense words fill endless paragraphs. Keep your sentences and paragraphs short and your language simple and direct. And be as conversational as you can without becoming informal or colloquial. A little pizzazz, the occasional nice turn of phrase, is not only permitted but welcome. Legal writing can sparkle, too.”

Judge A. Benjamin Goldgar

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Title search: Pleasing the Court

Also available as part of the eCourse

[eSupplement to the 2018 Robert O. Dawson Conference on Criminal Appeals](#)

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"Pleasing the Court"