

Writing Manual



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goals

To guide the writing and development of texts and articles produced by Reglab researchers;

To provide **transparency** regarding our methods and choices to the academic and professional communities;

To inspire similar initiatives across the industry, promoting a more accessible language that remains connected to social needs.



about Reglab

We are a private research center specializing in the media and technology sector, supporting companies, associations, and policymakers in making strategic decisions based on data and evidence.

Reglab is an initiative of b/luz – Baptista Luz Advogados.

Learn more:

www.reglab.com.br

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on academic and legal language

We begin from the premise that traditional academic (and legal) language is outdated and exclusionary. Most people struggle to understand it. This style of writing reinforces hierarchical dynamics, as if the legal field were inherently superior. Ultimately, it becomes an issue of access to knowledge.

The academic community has long discussed the need to shift toward a more objective, less ornate, and consequently less exclusionary language¹. Similar initiatives have emerged from think tanks, such as the Center for Plain Language in the United States, and from universities that publish their own academic writing guides, such as the University of Southern California² and the University of Oxford³.

For this reason, our choice of words, sentence structures, formatting, and conciseness is more than a matter of style — it is a deliberate strategy.

We are committed to writing clearly. To being objective and direct. We focus on the reader, recognizing that they may not be a specialist. And even when they are, our responsibility is to communicate what we believe, assert our position, and simplify complex ideas without losing depth.

Writing simply does not mean producing shallow work. In fact, writing simply is very, very difficult. **It requires translating complex ideas into accessible language and making them easy to understand.** This is why this guide aims to provide practical advice for simplifying writing with clarity and objectivity for everyone.

¹ In this Regard, see CLAYTON, V. The Ig Nobel Prize and Other Efforts to Eradicate Complex Academic Writing. *The Atlantic*, 2015; e PINKER, S. Why Academics' Writing Stinks. Available at: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-academics-stink-at-writing/>

² <https://cutt.ly/k5a3HvY>

³ <https://cutt.ly/K5a3LPW>

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writing and style tips

Writing well means writing simply, precisely, and objectively. This is difficult, but not impossible. Simplicity, objectivity, and economy of language are our core principles when writing.

Each time you write, ask yourself:

- I. Is this the simplest way to explain the idea in this paragraph?
- II. Can I cut unnecessary or redundant words?
- III. Would someone without a legal background understand this text?

First and foremost, any text must have cohesion and coherence. Following a logical sequence is essential for the text to make sense. Plan what you want to write before drafting; ensure that your ideas follow a clear sequence. ALWAYS reread your text. And remember: arguments should be presented in order of importance.

Additional Tips

Objectivity.

Is the question being answered clearly? If it is an article, am I addressing the topic directly and transparently? Is this what the reader expects from me?

Formatting Resources.

A helpful way to make the text lighter and more readable is the use of bullet points, links, and bold text. We also use boxes, tables, and graphics to highlight concepts, provide more didactic explanations, or emphasize key notes.

We do not use Latin.

Latin is perhaps the clearest example of how legal culture remains attached to traditions and forms of language that exclude most people and make understanding more difficult. Its use is permitted only when the expression is strictly necessary for understanding an argument (*e.g.*, *habeas corpus*).

We avoid foreign terms.

Excessive use of expressions in other languages, especially English, also makes comprehension harder. In the corporate world, terms such as *report*, *turnover*, *budget*, *meeting*, and *issue* are overused in speech and should be avoided in writing. Use an anglicism only when the translation does not accurately reflect the intended meaning (*e.g.*, *gatekeeper*).

No “academic-ese” or “legal-ese”!

Those expressions we used in law school to impress professors must go. We believe the first step is removing them from our vocabulary and embracing simplicity.

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Examples of expressions we recommend avoiding include:

“Hereinafter,” “in the capacity of,” “by virtue of,” “in the best form of law,” “for purposes of compliance,” “doctor” (as a formal legal title), “considerations on,” “notwithstanding,” “stipulates,” “legal instrument,” “furthermore,” “meanwhile / in the meantime,” “with regard to this topic,” “with regard to,” “issue / problematic,” “postulate / to postulate,” “it is necessary to,” “gave rise to,” “list of rights/obligations,” “as duly noted by,” “to shelter / to encompass,” “legal framework,” “under the aegis of,” “indeed / in effect”...

Excessive Use of Adverbs and Adjectives.

Expressions of intensity, absolutes, or broad generalizations are better suited to rhetorical activities (e.g., litigation, advocacy) than to academic or scientific writing. Adverbs of manner, intensity, or superlatives can undermine a text’s credibility (e.g., *there are enormous problems in this sector; there is extreme surveillance on social networks*).

Doctrine and Arguments from Authority.

This word comes from Latin. In Rome, it was used to describe what scholars said. In Portuguese, it became associated with religious “catechization” up until the 19th century. In Brazil, it was — and still is — a way of preserving legal and political elites.

Using words like *doutrina* (doctrine) and *doutrinadores* (doctrine writers) only perpetuates a “class division” within the legal field, as if certain individuals were above others due to their knowledge. In fact, this practice is almost nonexistent in other social sciences.

This does not mean that contributions from influential professors or researchers cannot be used. But avoid assigning titles or adjectives to people, such as: *as Professor Fernando argues, His Excellency the Judge, renowned jurist*, etc. And most importantly, do not rely on these authors as the sole source of legitimacy for your argument.

Connecting Elements.

Legal writing tends to overuse these. Excessive or unnecessary connectors can make the text slower and harder to read.

Below are examples of connectors that should be used in moderation:

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addition	for, moreover, and also, but also, on the one hand/on the other
cause	It is evident that, certainly, naturally, evidently, for
reaffirmation	In this sense, in other words, that is, again, in sum, in summary, in this way
position	But, despite, however, nevertheless, yet, still, neither, on the other hand
emphasis	Effectively, in effect, in truth, as we have seen, as we have reflected, once again
attention	Note that, pay attention to the fact that, it is observed that, we verify, once again
certainty	Evidently, certainly, undoubtedly, naturally
conclusion	Therefore, thus, finally, in sum, in conclusion, so that

Verb phrases with “shall”.

These constructions are overused in legal texts and contracts. Expressions such as “*shall pay*,” “*shall do*,” “*shall provide*” appear excessively. Try replacing them with the simple future instead: *will pay*, *will do*, *will provide*...

Avoiding the passive voice.

Another common issue in legal writing is the excessive use of the passive voice. Below are some examples and how to improve them:

	Replace with:
“The Court of São Paulo is hereby designated as the forum for disputes...”	“The parties designate the Court of São Paulo as the forum for disputes”
“The Party shall be subject to a penalty in the event of breach of contract”	“The Party will pay a penalty if it breaches the contract”
“It was decided at the Congress that...”	“The Congress decided that...”

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what is a non-imperative academic text?

At times, we present our opinion as if it were absolute. “Believe me, I am a superior being and my opinion is correct”. This happens more often than we think.

There is a rule in academic methodology that helps us monitor this tendency:

The AJR Rule:
Assertion, Justification, Reservation.

In theory, every good text and every good argument should follow this structure. For example:

The impact of digital advertising on the economy is significant (**assertion**). According to an IAB Brasil report, more than 35 billion reais were invested in this sector in 2023 (**justification**). This figure does not include investments made in Connected TV, a growing medium (**reservation**).

The approval of Bill 222/22 may negatively affect the technology market (**assertion**). This is because the data-retention obligations it introduces may generate substantial costs for companies, especially startups (**justification**). The impact will be smaller if Articles X, Y, and Z are removed (**reservation**).

citations, references, and bibliography

Preferably, do not begin a text with a quotation, as it weakens originality from the outset. If a citation is essential to the development of the idea or paragraph, use an indirect citation instead. When citing an article or author, referencing the source is mandatory.

Direct quotations should **ALWAYS** use double quotation marks.

References must follow a single, consistent standard. At Reglab, we adopt the **most recent ABNT rules**, preferably in the author-date format.



reglab

center for strategy
& regulation