

Death of legalese?

We've all been there. You're ready to register on a website and have to click on the terms and conditions to be **admitted** inside. Next appears a screen with a **seemingly** endless **cascade** of small print. Who writes this **gibberish**, you wonder? A quick scroll to the bottom and you click again to accept. If someone were to ask what you've just agreed to, you'd have to admit that you have no idea – just some standard legal stuff.

While lawyers have no problem understanding what they have **drafted**, somewhere along the way they have forgotten that the rest of the world finds their **legalese** hard to follow. But it does not have to be this way. The **plain** English movement is **sweeping across** the legal world, making reading – and understanding – text pleasant and easy.

Legal writing at its worst uses **archaic** expressions that belong more to the period of Shakespeare than to modern communication. Words like **heretofore**, **whereas** and **aforementioned** are terms you often see in contracts. Lawyers also have a **tendency** to write long expressions when short words **suffice**. How many times have you come across "with regards to" or "pertaining to" when a simple "about" would have done the job nicely?

That's not to say lawyers are bad people. Their profession makes them **cautious**, so naturally they aim to **cover** every possible **angle**. But to use complicated words when there is no need is a real **shame**. The true art of **lawyering** is finding the right balance. Aim for short words and simple expressions. Use the active voice. And, please, lose the Latin.

Glossary

admit	let in
aforementioned	mentioned before
angle	a way of looking at something
archaic	old-fashioned
cascade	flood
cautious	careful
cover	consider
draft	draw up, write
gibberish	nonsense
heretofore	before this time
lawyering	practicing law
legalese	legal language
pertain to	relate to
plain	clear, easy to understand
seemingly	apparently
shame	an unlucky situation
suffice	to be enough
sweep across	move across
tendency	habit
whereas	although, because
with regards to	in connection to, relating to