

Legal English is the type of **English** as used in **legal writing**. In general, a legal language is a formalized language based on **logic** rules which differs from the ordinary **natural language** in **vocabulary**, **morphology**, **syntax**, and **semantics**, as well as other linguistic features, aimed to achieve **consistency**, **validity**, **completeness** and **soundness**, while keeping the benefits of a human-like language such as complete **meaning**. However, Legal English has been referred to as a "sublanguage", as legal English differs from ordinary English. A specialized use of certain terms and linguistic patterns governs the teaching of legal language. Thus, "we study legal language as a kind of second language, a specialized use of vocabulary, phrases, and syntax that helps us to communicate more easily with each other".

The term **legalese**, on the other hand, is a term associated with a traditional style of legal writing that is part of this specialized discourse of lawyers: communication that "lay readers cannot readily comprehend". Proponents of **plain language** argue that legal "writing style should not vary from task to task or audience to audience...; whatever lawyers write must be Clear, Correct, Concise, and Complete".^[7] These four Cs describe "characteristics of good legal writing style" in the United States.^[7]

There are different kinds (genres) of legal writing: for example, academic legal writing as in law journals, juridical legal writing as in court judgments, or legislative legal writing as in laws, regulations, contracts, and treaties.

For lawyers operating internationally, communicating with clients and other professionals across cultures requires a need for transnational **legal awareness** and transcultural linguistic awareness.

Key Features

- Use of **terms of art**. Legal English, in common with the language used by other trades and professions, employs a great deal of technical terminology which is unfamiliar to the **layman** (e.g. *restraint of trade*,). Much of this vocabulary is derived from French and Latin.
- Use of **doublets and triplets**. The mix of languages used in early legalese led to the tendency in legal English to string together two or three words to convey a single legal concept. Examples are *null and void*, *fit and proper*, *terms and conditions*.

- Unusual **word order**. There is a noticeable difference in the word order used compared to Standard English. For example, *the provisions for termination hereinafter appearing or will at the cost of the borrower forthwith comply with the same*.
- Use of unfamiliar **pro-forms**. For example, *the same, the said, the aforementioned* etc. The use of the terms often does not replace the noun but are used as adjectives to modify the noun. For example, *the said John Smith*.
- Use of **pronominal adverbs**. Words like *hereof, thereof, and whereof* (and further derivatives, including *-at, -in, -after, -before, -with, -by, -above, -on, -upon*) are not often used in standard English. Their use in legal English is primarily to avoid repeating names or phrases, such as *the parties hereto* instead of *the parties to this contract*.
- *-er, -or, and -ee* name endings. Legal English contains some words and titles, such as employer and employee; lessor and lessee, in which the reciprocal and opposite nature of the relationship is indicated by the use of alternative endings.
- Use of **phrasal verbs**. Phrasal verbs play a large role in legal English and are often used in a quasi-technical sense, such as *parties enter into contracts, put down deposits, write off debts, attend at locations*, and so on.
- Operation within a specific disciplinary value system delimited by professional, epistemological and pragmatic concerns (use of *reasonable, proper, clear, appropriate*, etc.).