

USLawEssentials

ESSENTIAL LEGAL ENGLISH

For Everyone. Everywhere.



INTRODUCTION TO US LEGAL WRITING



Stephen Horowitz, a professor of Legal English at Georgetown Law, appreciates student-centered teaching, active learning, and creative approaches to integrating the learning of law and language. He also enjoys developing unique and high quality online legal English curriculum. In addition to serving as editor for the [Georgetown Legal English Blog](#) (which includes the [Legal English Resources page](#)), Stephen is the administrator for the [ETLEP Google Group](#) (listserv for the global legal English community), and co-host of the [USLawEssentials Law & Language podcast](#). He previously served as Director of Legal English Programs at St. John's Law School and prior to that worked as a corporate bankruptcy lawyer in New York. He is a graduate of Duke Law and also taught English in Japan in the mid-1990s on the Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) Program. Stephen currently serves on the Board of Advisors for the JET Alumni Association USA and is an avid ultimate frisbee player.

Self-Guided with Feedback

Enrolled students proceed through the course at their own pace but are introduced to their instructors to create a sense of community and support. Students know who will provide feedback on their essays.

A screenshot of a discussion forum post. The post title is "Tell us about your writing experience". It was posted by Daniel on December 20, 2023 at 2:51 pm. The post content asks users to write about their experience with legal English. There are two replies: one from manizhae on January 14, 2024 at 9:36 pm, and one from Daniel on January 16, 2024 at 10:26 pm. The Daniel reply says "Your experiences sound so interesting... Thanks for sharing this!".

Discussion Forum

Students can share ideas and ask questions in a discussion forum or directly email the instructors

Writing Assessment

Goals

- This writing assessment will help us understand what kind of writing support you need.
- After you submit your essay you will receive detailed feedback.

Instructions

- Set a timer for 30 minutes
- Open a Microsoft Word document so you can prepare to write your essay
- Read the Cell Phone Usage Rule and Fact Pattern below.
- Answer the question presented below. Write as much as you can and stop after 30 minutes.
- Upload your answer and we will respond with detailed feedback.

Cell Phone Usage Rule:

The Hordelson State Law for Mobile Phone Usage and Messaging provides that it is a moving violation and unlawful to use a wireless communication device to talk or listen to another person on the telephone or to view, send, or compose an electronic message or engage other application software while operating a motor vehicle.

Fact Pattern:

Writing Assessment

A student's first assignment is to submit a writing assessment so the instructors have a better idea of the student's starting level so we can gauge whether the course is effective.

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The screenshot shows a course page with a sidebar on the left containing a list of items: Legal Analysis and IRAC, Goals of the Legal Analysis, Issue, Model Essays, a Sample Essay, Horizontal IRAC Chart, Vertical IRAC Charts, Resubmission, and Parts. The main content area is titled '2.1: Introduction to Legal Analysis and IRAC' and includes sections for 'Goals', 'Instructions', and '1. Legal Analysis & IRAC'. The 'Goals' section lists two bullet points: 'Understand how US legal writers typically craft legal arguments' and 'Understand the IRAC structure of legal analysis'. The 'Instructions' section lists two bullet points: 'Complete the reading on Legal Analysis and IRAC' and 'Complete the exercise'. The '1. Legal Analysis & IRAC' section contains a paragraph: 'A. Legal analysis in the United States typically follows a pattern. The pattern looks like this:' followed by four numbered steps: '1) First, the writer states the legal question that needs to be answered.', '2) Second, the writer states the law that tells us what must be proven or disproven to answer that legal question.', '3) Next, the writer identifies specific facts and applies the law to those facts to demonstrate whether something has been proven or disproven.', and '4) Finally, the writer states the answer to the legal question based on whether something has been proven or disproven.'

Introduction to IRAC

Students receive an introduction to IRAC and examples of how to create a horizontal IRAC chart.

The screenshot shows a quiz question. The text reads: '"operating" a motor vehicle, a foot on the brake seems like a situation that is relatively less safe since a foot can slip off, or a driver distracted by a cell phone could suddenly decide to lift their foot from the brake at the wrong moment.' Below this is a paragraph: '[20] For all of these reasons, it seems safe to conclude that Parton did indeed violate the Cell Phone Ordinance by typing and sending a text to her friend while she was in her car, even if she did come to a full stop at the intersection.' The question is '2. Answer the Questions' and asks '1. What is sentence [1]'. There are four radio button options: 'Application', 'Conclusion', 'Issue', and 'Rule'. A 'Check' button is at the bottom left and a right arrow button is at the bottom right.

Quizzes

Modules include quizzes so students can assess whether they understand each part of IRAC and can recognize the type of writing they are expected to produce.

The screenshot shows an assignment page. The text reads: '"Oh, that voicemail icon," Dolly thought. "It never seems to work right." She tossed her phone back on the passenger seat.' Below this is a paragraph: 'Dolly drove about 50 feet to the next intersection and heard a siren. There was a police officer right behind Dolly, signaling for her to pull over to the curb. Dolly pulled over immediately. Officer Waggoner had been watching Dolly use her cell phone and told Dolly she violated Hodelson's new law.' Below this is a paragraph: 'Dolly admits she used her phone but does not believe she violated the new law.' There are three bullet points: 'Please advise whether Dolly violated the City Ordinance with her conduct by texting "c u soon".', 'Do not address whether she violated the ordinance by viewing the driving directions.', and 'Do not address whether she violated the ordinance by listening to her voicemail.' Below this is a line of dots: '.....'. Below this is a paragraph: '"Source: Legal Analysis: 100 Exercises for Mastery, Practice for Every Law Student (Second Edition), p. 4, Hill, Cassandra L., Vukadin, Katherine T., Carolina Academic Press (2017).'. Below this is a paragraph: 'Shortly after you submit your essay you will receive detailed feedback. Meanwhile, proceed to module 3.' At the bottom, there is a section for 'ASSIGNMENTS' with a '0/0 APPROVED' status and an 'Upload Assignment' button with the text '(Maximum upload file size: 256M)'.

Multiple Opportunities for Feedback

Students have multiple opportunities to submit and resubmit their written work to receive specific feedback on their ability to organize an essay according to IRAC.