Welcome to the second edition of The Handbook for the New Legal Writer—a legal writing textbook that is grounded in the realities of modern law practice.

We were thrilled by the positive response to the first edition of the Handbook. Legal writing students and professors told us that they appreciated the Handbook’s step-by-step instructions and annotated examples. In this second edition, we have added more examples of effective legal writing from recently decided cases and more examples of the types of documents students write in first-year legal writing courses.

The Handbook begins with objective writing in the form of law school exams and office memos. Later, we move to persuasive writing through trial motions and appellate briefs. Then, we cover other forms of legal communication, including correspondence via letter, email, and instant message. We also describe how to draft judicial opinions and prepare for oral argument.

At every step, the Handbook uses annotated examples of realistic legal documents prepared by the authors, skilled practitioners, and judges to show—rather than tell—students how to be successful legal writers. Because it is designed to be the only textbook students need to excel in their first-year legal writing programs, the Handbook also includes chapters on legal research, Bluebook citation, and writing tools, including grammar, punctuation, plain language, and style.

The Handbook uses the term “anchors” throughout the text to show students how to analyze legal questions. If the best answer in law school is, “It depends,” then we finish the answer by stating, “It depends on the anchors.” Anchors are the facts, rules, and reasons that the answer to a legal question depends upon. We coined this term as a tool to help students understand how to read and synthesize legal authorities and how to analyze a client’s legal problem. We have enjoyed watching as students and professors adopt this term over the last five years, and we think that this new edition offers even more detailed instruction in using anchors to conceptualize and organize legal documents.

We hope that by offering clear direction and pertinent examples, the Handbook will be an accessible, trustworthy, and valuable guide for the new legal writer.

Anchors aweigh!

Jill and Rachel
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