Seven Deadly Sins of Legal Writing
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1. **Passivity**
   a. **What is it?**
      i. Use of the passive voice instead of active voice
   b. **Example**
      i. “The car was owned by Bob” is passive.
      ii. “Bob owned the car” is active.
   c. **What’s wrong with it?**
      i. Use of the passive voice is less persuasive
   d. **Tips**
      i. Avoid unless there is a good reason to use

2. **Abstraction**
   a. **What is it?**
      i. Taking concrete lists and turning them into something abstract
   b. **Example**
      i. “This Act is intended to provide a mechanism for the recovery of attorney’s fees in certain actions” is abstraction.
   c. **What’s wrong with it?**
      i. Which actions?
      ii. The certain ones or the uncertain ones?
   d. **Tips**
      i. Make a list of the actions instead of referring to them as “certain actions.”
      ii. Say, “the following actions: (1) breach of contract; (2) declaratory judgment.”

3. **Adverbiage**
   a. **What is it?**
      i. Use of adverbs in our legal writing
   b. **Example**
      i. “Case law clearly states. . .”
      ii. “Tragically, the plaintiff was injured.”
   c. **What’s wrong with it?**
      i. Adverbs insult the reader’s intelligence by telling them how to react to each sentence
   d. **Tips**
      i. Avoid adverbs - Let the facts and the law speak for themselves

4. **Negativity**
   a. **What is it?**
      i. Use of double negatives or negatively phrasing a sentence
   b. **Example**
      i. “Settlement is not unlikely.”
ii. “At this firm, office romances are not encouraged,” as opposed to “discouraged.”
c. What’s wrong with it?
   i. It is confusing.
d. Tips
   i. Say what you mean. Avoid use of double negatives unless there is a good reason.

5. Redundancy
   a. What is it?
      i. Repetition of the same concepts or words.
   b. Example
      i. “Plaintiff releases all claims, demands, actions, causes of action, suits . . .”
   c. What’s wrong with it?
      i. It is boring. The reader tends to skip over the lists.
   d. Tips
      i. Avoid using extra, repetitive words unless there is a good reason.

6. Speaking Footnotes
   a. What is it?
      i. Footnotes with text in them.
   b. What’s wrong with it?
      i. They are distracting.
   c. Tips
      i. Only list citations and critical information in footnotes.

7. Verbosity
   a. What is it?
      i. Use of extra words, big words, old words
   b. Example
      i. Wherefore, Now Comes, Hereinafter, Further Affiant Sayeth Naught
   c. What’s wrong with it?
      i. They are boring, outdated, and serve no purpose
   d. Tips
      i. Get rid of the extra words in your writing