

Style Sheet (updated August 2020)

Style sheet that supplements guide to substantive content published in [Post 092](#).

- **Intimacy.** Write like you are talking to your friends. This is first-person writing all day, every day. Also, I very much favor contractions (I've, we'll, it's) because this is how we communicate among working peers.
- **Introduction.** We need a hook The first two sentences need to elicit a sense of curiosity among readers so they keep reading. I often use cut-outs below the lead graphic to do this work. Personal stories can do the trick, as we are wired to think in stories, so we keep reading. Self-deprecating stories work well, where we admit how we learned something, albeit the learning part comes at the end. The introduction is where I am most likely to edit and edit heavily.
- **Topic sentences, short paragraphs.** The first sentence of any paragraph should be a declarative sentence, often short. An exception might be a sentence structure designed to tell a story. It might also happen because we break one paragraph into two. This is online reading by busy professionals. We want to avoid dense, intimidating paragraphs.
- **Graphics.** We always have lead graphics. We have a Shutterstock subscription and a graphics guy for really complex graphics. We can handle this for you. But also, I'm happy to defer to your judgement. The ability to control graphics is one of the big pluses of this platform. Consider using pictures of people you reference in the article. Everyone likes the photos.
- **Citations.** Legal Evolution is applied research. We lean on ideas and data. Thus, we use quasi-formal citation that are modeled on legal "Bluebook" cites. Here is an example: See Huang et al., "[Family firms, employee satisfaction, and company performance](#)," 34 J. Corp. Fin. 108 (2015). Bloggers will just use hyperlinks. But I'm trying to do some culture shifting. When we add in formal citations, my academic colleagues will be more likely to accept it, particularly since we are longform. I think more academics should be writing for a practitioner audience (here, I include allied professionals as practitioners). The signal "Cf.," which I use on Legal Evolution a lot, means, basically, "this source is making a similar point" as opposed to see, which means "this is my source." "See also" means "this source supports, says the same thing as, the main source I am citing." I am happy to help you with this. Don't sweat it now.
- **Links to other Legal Evolution posts.** You can count on me to add them in when they are relevant. You don't need to worry about it, though I welcome you making connections on your own. The goal is an internally coherent body of knowledge on the legal industry. We want to show we're providing valuable content and are building upon it.
- **Subheadings.** Readers find them helpful. LexBlog recommends a subheading every 300 words. I break that rule in posts, but I am aware of it and think hard about how to break the text into parts. If not 300, then 350 or 400. When you are telling a story, you can break the rule, as well as posts that are very substantive, which require a review of literature and/or examples.
- **Lexblog.** Lexblog is a WordPress platform with lots and lots of high-quality functionality, including AI that identifies passive voice, too many long sentences, and insufficient transition words. I look at the statistics and am often prodded to edit for the benefit of the readers.
- **Tags.** We use them to signal to people/companies we are writing about and to help find things in the internal search. Use them liberally. It helps with SEO.
- **Publication.** We shoot for 7 am eastern on Sundays for longform pieces. We don't always make it. And often I am copyediting on Sundays. But we aspire to be always on time with near error-free copy. In the summer of 2020, I am publishing other pieces, mostly shorter or medium length, during the week on either Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.
- **Help.** I'm here to help. Might be worth going over the WordPress interface when I send along the login credentials.