



Definitions

Dos

Use sparingly and with care

Define words by writing them with initial capital letters ("Initial Caps")

Define terms of art if needed for the intended audience or court

Don'ts

Don't write crazy definitions

Don't use the defined word to define itself

Don't define a term that's never used

Don't create definition mazes

Don't include substance in definitions

Don't incorporate definitions by reference to other documents

Don't define terms that have a clear and adequate dictionary definition

How do you incorporate something by reference, anyway?

How to write definitions

Use more familiar terms

Use more precise terms

Identify components

Include list of intended items but be careful not to omit anything

Refer defined term by relationship to larger unit

How to test definitions

Search for defined terms

Search for similar terms to replace with defined term

Types of definitions:

Term defined when first used

Term fully defined in a definitions section

Example: The term "law student" **means** an individual enrolled as a full-time or part-time student in a law school accredited by

Term partially defined

Example of enlarging: The term "law student" includes part-time students, as well as full-time students.

Example of limiting: The term "law student" does not include a person who attends a law school class without being enrolled.

Term fully and partially defined

Example: The term "law student" means an individual enrolled as a full-time or part-time student in an accredited law school, but does not include an individual who ...

Examples in definition

To give reader an idea of what definition might mean in more concrete terms

Use sparingly to avoid being construed as being more definitive than intended