

## Michigan author makes the case for plain language

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If you're tired of reading or creating obfuscatory contracts and literature -- gobbledygook with excess verbiage -- Joseph Kimble's latest book should be quite useful and enjoyable.

"Writing for Dollars, Writing to Please" is subtitled "The Case for Plain Language in Business, Government and Law." It's published by the Carolina Academic Press for \$23.

While it's less than 170 pages, this slim book packs a powerful punch; it covers the usage of language in a positive way, making the text interesting and fascinating.

Kimble, who has taught legal writing for 30 years at Lansing's Thomas M. Cooley Law School, is an authority on the subject.

He's the acclaimed author of "Lifting the Fog of Legalese: Essays on Plain Language." Kimble is the longtime editor of the "Plain Language" column in the Michigan Bar Journal and has lectured on the subject throughout the world.

His basic premise is to keep it simple -- his book is divided into five parts; while it doesn't have (or need) an index, numerous footnotes are provided.

After a brief preface and a chapter on why he began to question legal style, Kimble briefly examines key elements of plain language, including design, organization, and the usage of sentences and words.

He then delves into answering the critics, offering a logical explanation about the assets of using plain language. He goes through 10 sections of myth-busting, noting that simplicity works, with the end result of making documents intelligible to the greatest number of possible readers.

Another part examines 40 historical highlights from around the world, where usage of plain language has had extraordinary results.

Kimble doesn't generalize, but cites distinct examples of how these changes have been successful in countries as diverse as Iceland, Australia, and South Africa. He doesn't skimp on including historic changes brought on by simplification in England, Canada, or the United States.

The last part of Kimble's book showcases the extraordinary potential of real benefits, focusing on the increased savings of time and money. He offers examples of actual language changes, denoting many amazing results.

This is an absorbing, eye-opening book that's extraordinarily useful. It should be required reading for new legislators, government officials, policy makers, and long-winded attorneys, with a goal of making life much easier for the average individual.

Ray Walsh, owner of East Lansing's Curious Book Shop, has been reviewing books regularly since 1987.

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### Abstract (Document Summary)

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