

How to Publish a Scholarly Legal Article

By Jeffrey Dinwoodie

Writing and publishing law review articles is an excellent way for young lawyers to enhance and hone the research, writing, citation, and project management skills that are essential to a successful legal career. Academic legal writing also helps junior attorneys develop subject matter expertise, and it can help bolster one's professional credentials and reputation. This guide will help you plan, write, and publish a scholarly legal article.

Timing is everything

- Even though most law reviews accept submissions throughout the year, the vast majority of them consider submissions and make most of their publication offers during two time frames: March and late August through September.
- With these two review periods in mind, work backwards and map a schedule for finishing your article in time to submit it for review. Create goals and milestones to help keep you on track with completing all research and writing stages (e.g., first, second, and third drafts, citation work, and proofreading).

Selecting a topic

- Choose a topic for which you have a true passion. Having a vested interest in the topic will help motivate you through what can be a lengthy writing process.
- To help build your credibility as an author, pick a topic that is relevant to your practice area. Writing about a topic that is related to your work also will enhance your knowledge and help position you as an expert in the field.
- For topic ideas, consider current events, trends, and controversies, as well as new laws, regulations, and decisions that leave unanswered questions or create debates, conflicts, or possible unintended consequences. Industry publications, general and legal newspapers, legal blogs, and law professors also are all good sources for article ideas.
- Evaluate the number of articles already written on your topic idea. Editors generally prefer articles that explore novel issues. If several articles already have been written on your topic, be sure that you offer a new angle or unique perspective.

Consider your employer

- Before you begin, check whether your employer has policies pertaining to employee authorship. Some employers have internal review and clearance procedures.
- Consider whether any of the opinions you plan to express in the article could be seen as adverse, offensive, or controversial by your employer, colleagues, and clients.

Writing and editing

- To maintain momentum in writing your article, schedule time to work on it regularly, and try to follow your schedule as closely as possible.
- Purchase *Burton's Legal Thesaurus, Fourth Edition* (McGraw-Hill 2007), an invaluable tool for finding the precise word for a nuance or context.
- Seek feedback on your drafts from your family, friends, colleagues, and former law school professors.

Submitting

- Read the article "Information for Submitting Articles to Law Reviews & Journals" by University of Missouri at Kansas City School of Law Professors Allen K. Rostron and Nancy Levit (*available at* http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1019029). It provides useful information on the submission requirements of individual journals.
- Most journals accept article submissions through an author's preference of e-mail or ExpressO™ (<http://law.bepress.com/expresso/>), a fee-based service that sends, tracks, and manages article submissions.
- The Northern Kentucky University Salmon P. Chase College of Law offers an e-mail merge tool (<http://chaselaw.nku.edu/faculty/ejournals.php>) that enables an author to submit an article to multiple journals simultaneously, by using blind carbon copy, without the hassle of looking up and typing each journal's e-mail address.

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Publishing

- [Purchase *Academic Legal Writing*, Third Edition](#) by UCLA School of Law Professor Eugene Volokh (Foundation Press 2007), a comprehensive writing guide with advice on important and easily overlooked matters such as crafting a catchy and effective title, working successfully with editors, and publicizing a completed article.
- If your article is not selected for publication, set it aside for several weeks. With fresh eyes, consider whether you can make any additional edits or improvements. After tweaking your article, resubmit it during the next submission period.
- When your article is published, be sure to order extra hard copies to distribute to your family, friends, colleagues, and clients.

NEXT STEPS

- [Advanced Writing for Lawyers with Gary Kinder](#). ABA Center for CLE and ABA YLD. Online CLE Series.
- [The Modern Rules of Style](#). 2007. ABA Book Publishing. PC # 1610056.

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