

COURSE DESCRIPTION FOR

The LawProse Editing Method

Every skill—whether it’s playing a musical instrument or scoring points in a sports competition—can be improved by isolating the component subskills and mastering each one of them. Editing is no different. It is, after all, really a complex series of mini-skills by which you react to a draft, spotting problems and fixing them.

How do you spot the *right* problems and fix them in the *right* way? That’s as difficult as meeting Jonathan Swift’s definition of “syle”: putting proper words in proper places. A good editor approaches a text with the strong suspicion that the writer *hasn’t* put the right words in the right places—and seeks to remedy all the defects.

At LawProse, we developed a step-by-step editing method that will prompt editors or self-editors to carry out edits that they might otherwise miss. These “new” types of edits then become part of your editorial repertoire. With a little practice using the LawProse Editing Method, you’ll find yourself executing previously unused techniques almost automatically. It’s a matter of conditioning yourself.

The techniques to be used differ depending on the document. If you’re editing someone else’s draft, you’re sure to need to make level-one edits during your first read-through. But if you’re engaged in self-editing and are therefore intimately familiar with the subject-matter, you may well start with level-three edits and then work through the first two levels. That’s a matter of how familiar you are with the writing when you begin editing.

And then there’s the question what type of document you’re editing. There’s one approach for analytical and persuasive writing (memos and briefs) and another for transactional and legislative writing (contracts and statutes). We’ll work through a motion and a contract to demonstrate the two approaches.