

Sample Tech Skill Modules for Legal Writing

Debbie Ginsberg

May 2016

While generally students are familiar with the basic tools in Word, many students do not know how to use the advanced tools available in popular office software that would help them with their assignments in school and at work. Our librarians have created a series of modules to help students become more familiar with common office technology skills.

The modules below can be taught during the fall semester to help students with their first legal writing assignments, or the spring semester as they are getting ready for their first summer jobs. These modules are designed to:

- Bring all students up to speed on the basics of Microsoft Word
- Demonstrate time-saving tools available in Word
- Explore the benefits and risks of using cloud-based tools like Google Drive
- Introduce advanced tools in common PDF applications like Adobe Reader

The modules will have students work in groups as much as possible to encourage students with advanced skills to share their knowledge with their peers.

Modules Available

Microsoft Word

- Word Foundations (styles, page numbers, footnotes)
- Word Advanced (table of contents, table of authorities)

Document Management

- Using Google Drive and Cloud Storage (note taking, collaborative editing, file storage)
- Working with PDFs (editing and annotating tools)

Other Tech Skills

- Creating Videos for Review (useful for oral argument preparation)
- Speaking and Listening to Your Computer (useful for creating and reviewing written assignments)

Sample Modules

Word Foundations

Reasoning:

While most students will know how the basic tools in Word, many students are not familiar with some of its time-saving features. This module is designed to introduce some of these features.

Student learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Design the look and feel of the document with text and heading styles
- Modify headers & footers
- Create footnotes
- Use keyboard shortcuts

Teaching activities

The librarian will use a sample document and have student “experts” (who are already familiar with advanced Word tools) help modify it. Students will apply formatting changes using text and heading styles, create 2-3 footnotes, add page numbers, and experiment with common keyboard shortcuts.

Expected time

15-20 minutes

Word Advanced

Reasoning:

Many law students don't know how to quickly and easily create Tables of Contents or create Tables of Authorities. A quick demonstration should help students understand the basics of these tools save them time when completing their assignments.

Student learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Review using text and heading styles
- Use navigation pane to review document structure
- Create Tables of Contents
- Create Tables of Authorities

Teaching activities

In this module, the librarian will introduce Word skills likely to be new to many students. The librarian will provide a sample document with footnotes. Students will work in small groups to modify it. Students will add styles to the sample document. They will use the styles to create a Table of Contents. They will mark up the citations in the footnotes to create a Table of Authorities.

Expected time

20-30 minutes