

# Sample Article for New Content Writers

In order to write web content that actually gets views (and converts those views into customers), you need to offer your reader something valuable. Whether you give them the results from a recent poll or a “How-to” guide for filling out an asylum application, they need to know what they will gain from reading your content.

You can use this guide as a sample article for what we expect to see from our content writers. While this guide is by no means perfect, it should give you a good glimpse into our post format so that you can more accurately copy our style in your application.

As some general tips, remember to keep both your paragraphs and your sentences short, and make sure to use a casual, but professional, tone in your prose. Keep in mind that most web content is targeted at an 8th-grade reading level, so adjust your article accordingly. As an immediate example, this article currently sits at a 9th-grade reading level.

## Header 2: Your Book Chapter

Words	Headings	Paragraphs	Blocks
1214	10	39	52

### Document Outline

- Title** How to Fight Drug Possession and Distribution Charges in Virginia
- **H2** What Are Virginia's Drug Laws?
  - **H4** Simple Possession  
*(Incorrect heading level)*
  - **H4** Possession with Intent to Distribute
  - **H4** Constructive Possession
- **H2** Common Strategies for Fighting Drug Possession and Distribution Charges in Virginia
  - **H4** Apply for Virginia's First Offender Program  
*(Incorrect heading level)*
  - **H4** Ask About Drug Court
  - **H4** Look into Making a Plea Deal
  - **H4** Try to Get Your Case Dropped
- **H2** Conclusion

Google and other search engines index articles such as these based on a variety of factors. While it's my job to optimize our articles for search engines, there are still a few things I expect from our content writers to make my job easier.

The first expectation I have is that your headers are at least somewhat optimized for search. In practical terms, this means that your headers should roughly equate to a keyword or phrase that someone is likely to actually search in Google.

For example, “alimony” and “spousal support” mean the exact same thing in Virginia. However, “alimony” is searched 10x more often than “spousal support,” despite the fact that the term

“alimony” never actually appears in the Virginia Code.

For this reason, even if you’re talking about “spousal support in Virginia,” you should still use the keyword “alimony.” I will normally give you this information when posting new article topics.

Similarly, a section titled “How to File for Alimony in Virginia” would be many times more effective than a section titled “alimony.” This is because very few people simply type “alimony” into google and expect a specific result.

## Header 4: Your Section Title

Section titles should use the Header 4 style. Generally, bloggers use these headers to break up larger sections in their posts. For example, we list four common strategies for fighting drug possession charges using the Header 4 tag in the example picture I linked above (ignore the *incorrect heading level* formatting bug).

These sections are generally ~350 words long and should provide additional content about a particular aspect of the Header 2 topic.

## Section Readability

While article structure is important, you should also pay close attention to *how* you’re conveying the content in your article. There are several tactics you can use to make your content more readable / scannable.

For example:

- You could use a list to break up content into bite-sized pieces, making it more readable (i.e. Step 1: do this, Step 2: do that....).
- Bullet points are also a good idea when each piece of information you’re conveying is equally important to your section. For example, all the suggestions on this particular list are equally important tips (with no real sequential order), so I used bullets.
- Use charts sparingly. If the information wouldn’t make sense in an excel spreadsheet, it won’t make sense in a blog post.

Finally, I’m a big fan of the “read-aloud” test. If you can read your article out loud without tripping over yourself or messing up your sentences, it’s probably fine for publication. If not, you should consider further edits.

## Citations and Links

Citations and links are important for building credibility. However, they need to flow well in the content so that you don’t confuse the reader.

If you find an online resource, don't use a citation. Instead, simply link to the web page you are referring to in the context of the content itself.

For example, [according to the Virginia Code](#), the willful, deliberate, premeditated killing of any other person is a serious criminal offense. As a Class 1 felony, it is punishable with [massive fines and imprisonment for life in a state correctional facility](#).

We encourage you to link to preexisting articles on our website, as well as articles or information on third party websites.

Note that you should never link to our direct competitors or sources which reference laws in another state. Nolo, Wikipedia, Cornell Law Statutes, nonprofit organizations, and other general sources of legal information provided by non-legal service providers are all fine.

## Conclusion

You should always end your articles with a Header 2 in the form of either "conclusion," "what a lawyer can do to help," or "key takeaways."

Before you even begin writing your outline, always ask yourself what a reader would appreciate knowing about the subject. Your answer to this question should be stated in the introduction, built towards in your body, and summarized in the conclusion.

If you have any further questions about our writing guidelines, feel free to reach out to our marketing department at [andrew@tingenwilliams.com](mailto:andrew@tingenwilliams.com).

(^ This, by the way, is a "call to action." Make sure to include at least one in your article.)