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Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary



Synopsis

Learn the language of the law, without the legalese! Open the average law dictionary and chances are you'll feel more confused than before you read a word. Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary is different. From "abrogate" to "zero tape", we've cut down on the Latin and defined common (and some not-so-common) terms you can really use to understand and access the law. Set aside those dusty, outdated law dictionaries! Written for the 21st century, this essential reference contains complete definitions of the legal terms you need today. If you're a law student, paralegal, accountant, small business owner or librarian -- anyone whose work or life touches the law -- this fully up-to-date A to Z guide puts access to the law into your hands. Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary contains 3,800 plain-English legal definitions, including many newly coined terms you'll find online and off, such as "typosquatting" and "patent troll". Of course, if you need definitions for legal standards -- even when they're in Latin -- you'll find those here too. Plus, find a copy of the Constitution of the United States of America for your reference in the pages following the complete list of definitions.

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Customer Reviews

"Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary" by the Editors of Nolo, Gerald N. Hill and Kathleen Thompson Hill is promoted as, "This is `not' you grandfather's law dictionary." This law dictionary is written in clear English and contains complete definitions of legal terms you need today. As an attorney, this book will not replace my "Black's Law Dictionary" which is the standard for legal dictionaries, but this lighter, plain-English text is very convenient to have on hand. For most people, this text is all they

would need when wondering about a legal term. To illustrate the differences in dictionaries, let's look at the word "partner." Most of us know what it means, and it is a common word that we use in business all the time. The definition in "Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary" is: "One of the co-owners and investors in a partnership. Each partner claims a share of the the (sic) business's income or losses on the partner's individual tax return. General partners are responsible for the debts, contracts, and actions of all the partners in the business. Limited partners do not share responsibility for partnership debts and cannot share in management decisions." (Note that I found a typo in the definition noted with the (sic)). "Black's Law Dictionary" provides much more under the listing of "partner." "A member of partnership or firm; one who has united with others to form a partnership in business." There are definitions for each of the following: Dormant partners, full or general partner, junior partner, limited partner, liquidating partner, nominal partner, ostensible partner, quasi partner, secret partner, silent partner, special partner, and surviving partner.

A lawyer, law student, or paralegal can never have too many law dictionaries! This one is a "starter dictionary", with simple, generalized definitions of terms that an individual might overhear or otherwise encounter while working around legal professionals. It's a dictionary to consult when you don't want to interrupt a conversation to ask what is being talked about. However, the word selection is somewhat spotty. For example, the PKPA (Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act) and UCCJEA (Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act) are defined, but there is no mention of the equally important ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act). Also, there are definitions for "community property" and "separate property" but none for "transmutation" or "tracing". Many of the included terms aren't legal terms at all, at least not in the traditional sense. Examples of these are the Internet terms "phishing", "cybersquatting", and "dooced". A major shortcoming of the dictionary is that many definitions are vague and wander off into discussions of related concepts. For example, "forum" is defined as: "The court in which a lawsuit is filed or in which a hearing or trial is conducted. The appropriate forum depends on which court has personal jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter of the case." Some definitions don't quite hit the mark with me. For example, "BFP" is defined as: "Slang for bona fide purchaser." To me, the term is not slang, but an acronym in wide use. Perhaps the authors believed that "acronym" wasn't "plain English"--even though Google searches for texting terms like "BFF" will take you immediately to online dictionaries of acronyms. For law students, the definitions are not precise enough.

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