

# How NOT to Write Content for Your Statewide Website: Legal Information Content in Minutes

**GOAL:** Increase quality content on your statewide website in multiple formats (e.g., static, multimedia, and automated document content) and more easily maintain your content. Below you'll find some simple and comforting recipes to help you get started.

## Easy-Bake Weekday Meal Idea (with Secret Sauce)

Serves all public statewide website visitors, newsletter readers, and advocate users

*Expertise level: beginner*



LawHelp.org



### Ingredients:

- Trusted .gov websites, other government content resources, or ShareLaw.org
  - Text editor (e.g., Notepad for Windows/TextEdit for Mac)
  - Statewide website (SWWS)
  - Word processor program with fact sheet template (optional)
  - Adobe Professional (optional)
1. Locate a trusted government website that has relevant content or newsfeeds for your SWWS user population (e.g., [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov), [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov), or [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)).
  2. Bookmark the deep link content item(s).
  3. Copy the content from the trusted site and paste into your text editor program. (This cleans out all the unseen formatting from the website that may conflict with your SWWS.)
  4. You can either paste the content from the text editor into your word processor or paste the content into your SWWS.
  5. Reformat to your tastes.
  6. For the secret sauce, edit the content for plain language readability (between a 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level). Plain language tools include Flesch-Kincaid Readability in Microsoft Word, WriteClearly.org, Plain Language Library, and WriteClearly Gadget.

**CHEF'S TIPS:** At the end of the content piece, include "Original Content Provided By ..." with a deep link to the content. If you use this piece for something other than a news article, then you will have to provide content updates at some point in the future (e.g., to update income guidelines for food stamps). This link, even if it no longer exists in the future, will provide a good reminder of where to look when you update the content.

**CHEF'S NOTES:** Some content managers may ask: "Why not just link to the resource?" Of course you can choose to link to the content item, and I recommend that you do (see Chef's Tip above). Many content items should simply be linked from your SWWS; however, some content items will benefit your users (both advocate and self-help) as a content item directly on your SWWS. For example, ALSP provides up-to-date food stamp guidelines both as a Web page and as a printable PDF. This avoids website visitors from having to click through, and it provides an easier "take away" for both the self-help user and the legal advocate to print and mail. The content piece also provides branding for your organization.

## Multimedia Weekday Mix

Serves all self-help users and legal advocates

*Expertise level: intermediate*



### Ingredients:

- Trusted .gov websites, other government content resources, or ShareLawVideo.org
- Statewide website (SWWS)

1. Locate a trusted government website that has relevant video/multimedia content or newsfeeds for your SWWS user population (e.g., [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov), [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov), or [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)). You can also take advantage of the wealth of resources in the legal aid community by visiting [www.ShareLawVideo.org](http://www.ShareLawVideo.org).
2. Many of these government resources make it easy to share with just a click of a button. YouTube has a share feature at the top of all of the videos posted on its site. (If you visit the government website directly, you can also find the raw html code.)
3. Click on the "Share" link if you're on a site like YouTube. You'll have the option to copy and paste the direct URL. Instead, click "Embed."
4. Before you copy and paste the html embed code, see if you have any options. Some video sites give you the chance to change the height and width of the video. Changing the size alters the html code, so resize to your tastes and find a video size that won't overwhelm your Web page.
5. Copy the embed code and paste it into the html box of your SWWS.

**CHEF'S TIP:** Watch out for iFrames! If the video isn't appearing on your SWWS, iFrames may be the culprit. Some video sites (like YouTube and Vimeo) give you the option to copy and paste the old embed code. If this option isn't available, you can use the handy html code below. Don't forget to replace URL with the direct link to the video.

```
<embed width="480" height="385" src="URL"></embed>
```

## Easy Lunchtime Potluck

Serves all self-help users and legal advocates

*Expertise level: beginner*

ShareLaw™  
BETA

### Ingredients:

- ShareLaw.org
- Statewide website (SWWS)
- Text editor (e.g., Notepad for Windows/TextEdit for Mac)
- Word processor program with fact sheet template (optional)
- Adobe Professional (optional)

1. Visit ShareLaw at [www.sharelaw.org](http://www.sharelaw.org) and create an account.
2. Locate a relevant content piece for your SWWS user population.
3. Copy the content from the trusted site and paste into your text editor program. (This cleans out all the unseen formatting from the website that may conflict with your SWWS.)

4. You can either paste the content from the text editor into your word processor or paste the content into your SWWS.
5. Reformat to your tastes.
6. For the secret sauce, edit the content for plain language readability (between a 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level). Plain language tools include Flesch-Kincaid Readability in Microsoft Word, WriteClearly.org, Plain Language Library, and WriteClearly Gadget.

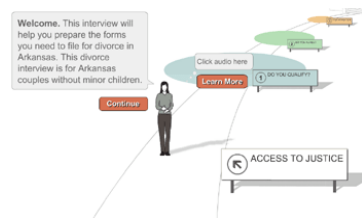
**CHEF'S TIPS:** See notes from the Easy-Bake Weekday Meal Idea (with Secret Sauce)

**CHEF'S NOTES:** See notes from the Easy-Bake Weekday Meal Idea (with Secret Sauce)

## Automate It: A Simplified Meal

Serves all self-help users and legal advocates

Expertise level: *intermediate/advanced*



### Ingredients:

- LawHelp Interactive (LHI)
- Statewide website (SWWS)
- HotDocs Developer Software (optional)
- A2J Author Software (optional)

1. Visit LHI at <https://lawhelpinteractive.org> and create an account. Select either “Advocate” or template provider (if you are a developer).
2. Click on “Portal” to view and tryout some templates. There are 3845 resources as of 1/11/2013.
3. Search and select a template link that is suitable for your purposes (e.g. not based on another jurisdiction’s law – something federally based like “debt collection” or “identity theft.”)
4. Test the template by clicking “Test” to the right of the link.
5. Either download the files to modify them and upload to your account OR Click on the template link and copy the link provided for “URL for Website.”
6. Create link on an existing webpage on your SWWS or create a new page just for the resource.

**CHEF'S TIP:** If you do not upload the template (or templates) to your own LHI developer account then you need to periodically check to make sure that the resource is deleted or in need of updating.

**CHEF'S NOTES:** Thank the developer!

### Presenters Contact Information

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