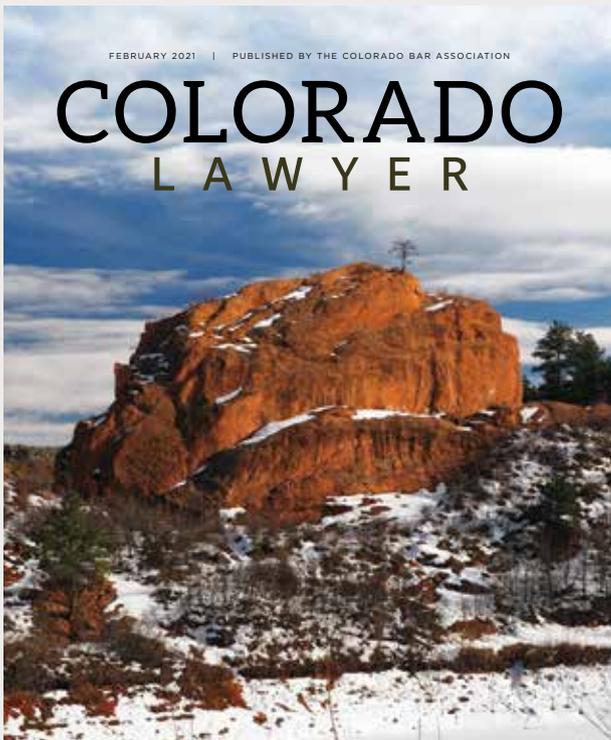


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Modern Legal Writing: Demystifying Spaces

As a practitioner devoted to effective legal writing, I enjoyed the article by Ginette Chapman on “Legal Writing Demystified” [Feb. 2021, p. 18]. I have one small quibble—extremely small in the context of what everyone is dealing with these days. Ms. Chapman directs that all double spaces after periods must be removed, in favor of one space. Perhaps this is generational, but to me, one space after a period, instead of two, is just wrong. From various legal writing seminars I have attended, I am not alone. Maybe the answer is one or two, depending on preference. In any event, thanks to Ms. Chapman for writing the article and to the *Colorado Lawyer* for running it.

Marilyn S. Chappell

Special Counsel, Sweetbaum Sands Anderson PC

I appreciate Marilyn Chappell's letter. It's always heartening to hear from people who care about the nuances of legal writing! I agree my article would have done well to clarify that some of my recommendations are not iron-clad rules.

I do, however, stand by my suggestion to use only one space after a period. Though two spaces was at one time de rigueur, standards have swung sharply in recent decades, and today major style guides (including *The Redbook*) all agree that only one space belongs after a period. A lawyer's goal generally is to persuade, and disregarding standard practices may make written documents less persuasive by appearing sloppy. If you happen to know that a judge or partner for whom you're writing prefers two spaces after a period, by all means go ahead and use two spaces. But otherwise, it's safest to follow commonly accepted practices. In addition, using one space after a period has a practical benefit: it's easy to find inconsistencies in the number of spaces after a period (a definite no-no) by running a search for two spaces. In the end, what's most important is to carefully hone one's work. Adherence to any single practice is a relatively small matter in the overall context of your writing—and, as Ms. Chappell points out, in the overall context of these times.

Ginette Chapman

Legal and Policy Editor, Legaledits.com