

## To the Student

*American Legal English: Using Language in Legal Contexts.* What does that mean? This book is designed to provide you with an introduction to basic legal information and to improve your ability to understand and communicate with your legal counterparts around the world. This is not a comprehensive introduction to the law of the United States; that would be impossible in a book this size. However, as you go through the materials, you will discover that the basic legal information given to you enhances your ability to use legal language.

*English proficiency needed:* To gain the most benefit from this book, your general English skills should be fairly well developed. In instructor terms, we would say you should be an intermediate to advanced student of English. As an intermediate student you will have to work a little harder to understand all the material that is presented. We have, however, not set you an impossible task.

*Topics:* We have chosen the topics in the book for three reasons: (1) to introduce you to the process of legal reasoning in the American legal system; (2) to give you a general introduction to American law; and (3) for general interest or usefulness in the workplace. Each chapter addresses a particular area of the law. Within each chapter are exercises designed to make you think about the legal topic in general, followed by a more detailed explanation of the law, incorporating materials from actual cases, treatises, and statutes.

*Organization:* The three levels in each chapter provide a smooth transition from simple concepts to more complex ones. **Discovering Connections** is a warm-up activity, focusing on law in your own country or non-legal concepts that lead into the law. **Legal Listening** and **Legally Speaking** give you the opportunity to practice new vocabulary terms before beginning to get into more depth in the chapter. The **Legal Thumbnail** provides a simplified summary of the law along with actual statutory and case materials.

For this second edition, we have moved to a system of appendixes for language, culture, writing, reading, and oral communication tasks. Depending on the language level of your class, your instructor will refer you to the appendixes as needed. Of course, you are free to review the appendixes on your own.

The theory behind this book is that you will already have an idea of how the law works in your own country; what we have done is provide a simplification of some aspects of American law and the vocabulary to discuss them along with

opportunities for you to employ that vocabulary. Although you will learn many new words in this text, we have chosen to **boldface** only legal terminology. You should pay careful attention to all boldfaced terms and their definitions often placed in brackets. Though the legal exercises are less complicated than a practicing attorney might encounter, they nonetheless contain the same types of skills that the attorney must put to work for his or her clients.

Learning about an area such as law is hard work; the issues are complicated, the evidence not always clear cut, and the statutes frequently ambiguous. It is our hope that after having completed your study of this book you will not only find that American law is a bit more comprehensible to you but also that you have improved your understanding of how to decipher legal English and make that language work for you, your clients, and your colleagues.