

Illinois Family Lawyer's General Reading List

Letter to Isham Reavis on November 5, 1855

My dear Sir:

I have just reached home, and found your letter of the 23rd. ... If you are resolutely determined to make a lawyer of yourself, the thing is more than half done already. It is but a small matter whether you read *with* anybody or not. I did not read with anyone. Get the books, and read and study them till, you understand them in their principal features; and that is the main thing. It is of no consequence to be in a large town while you are reading. I read at New-Salem, which never had three hundred people living in it. The *books*, and your *capacity* for understanding them, are just the same in all places. ***

Very truly Your friend
A. Lincoln

Illinois Family Law—

Gitlin's Illinois Annotated Family Practice Desktop Code-Updated Annually. Two-volume set. Volume I contains:

- [750 ILCS 5/ Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act.](#)
- Illinois Supreme Court Rules—the 900 Section. View this as a *supplement to our family law statutes*.
- [750 ILCS 10/ Illinois Uniform Premarital Agreement Act.](#)
- [750 ILCS 16/ Non-Support Punishment Act.](#)
- [750 ILCS 22/ Uniform Interstate Family Support Act.](#)
- [750 ILCS 28/ Income Withholding for Support Act.](#)
- [750 ILCS 36/ Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act.](#)
- [750 ILCS 45/ Illinois Parentage Act of 2015.](#)
- [750 ILCS 60/ Illinois Domestic Violence Act of 1986.](#)
- Key provisions of the Illinois Code of Civil Procedure applicable to family law proceedings.

Other key statutes to read include:

- [710 ILCS 35/ Uniform Mediation Act.](#)
- 735 ILCS Code of Civil Procedure Articles: 2, 7, 11, 19, and 21
- [740 ILCS 110/ Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act.](#)

Also, read your local rules and standing orders in any court where you are practicing.

Thus, the core reading of any Illinois family lawyer is to start with the statutory law. Together with reading this book, consider the following additional resources:

Divorce Taxation—

Divorce Taxation: Version 21. James Publishing. See:

<https://jamespublishing.com/product/frumkes-on-divorce-taxation/>

Brian C. Vertz and Mitchell E. Benson. Updated regularly. *The author's father and the original author of this text, Mel Frumkes, were good friends. This handbook adopts a causal style while addressing complex divorce tax issues. It includes the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, tax considerations from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.*

An excellent starting place to test your current knowledge of tax law is available on the IRS website for their Special Enrollment Examination.

<https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/enrolled-agents/sample-special-enrollment-examination-questions-and-official-answers>

QDROs—

- [*Qualified Domestic Relations Order Handbook, Fourth Edition*](#) by Gary Schulman, published by Aspen Publishers, supplement published annually. This book is the definitive guide to QDROs for family lawyers. It details our issues when negotiating and drafting QDROs. It contains models for defined benefit, defined contribution, and (hybrid) cash-balance-plan QDROs. It contains a model COAP. The current edition includes a sample test that ensures you review your knowledge of QDRO issues. The model forms are updated annually, sometimes extensively. \$1,088 for a three-month subscription. \$4,995 for the loose leaf book. Last updated: 2025-06-06.

- *QDROs: The Division of Benefits Through Qualified Domestic Relations Orders*, U.S. See: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/default/files/ebsa/about-ebsa/our-activities/resource-center/publications/qdros.pdf>.

Business Valuation Books—

- [*Valuing a Business: The Analysis and Appraisal of Closely Held Companies*](#), 6th Edition, Pratt, Reilly and ASA Educational Foundation, McGraw Hill (2022). *This book was first published in 1981, and I have read every version since the 2nd edition.* Shannon writes for the newest version:

“Over these many years I have found *Valuing a Business* to be valuable tool in teaching new appraisers the basics of valuation and in teaching attorneys and other stakeholders what business appraisers do. The primary goal of the sixth edition is to explain busin

ess valuation in an easy-to-understand style, focused on the nuances of valuing closely held businesses and interests in those businesses. I think readers will agree that the sixth edition has succeeded in meeting this goal.”

- [*Understanding Business Valuation: A Practical Guide to Valuing Small- to Medium-Sized Businesses, 6th Edition*](#). Gary Trugman, BVR LLC (2022). The author states, “To get the most out of this book, you must read it, not only in its entirety, but also in the sequence in which it is written. Don’t go to the chapter on discount rates without reading the earlier sections of the book.” [An economical version is available for \\$18 of the August 2018 Ebook through Wiley.](#)

Reading Tax Returns—

- [*The Business Tax Return Handbook*](#), 5th Edition (2023). Jack Zuckerman, Fam. Law Section, ABA.
- [*1040 Handbook: A Guide to Income and Asset Discovery*](#), 8th Edition. Fam. Law Section, ABA (2021). Updated based on a 2020 tax return.

Bankruptcy and Divorce—

The Family Lawyer's Guide to Bankruptcy: Forms, Tips, and Strategies, Shayna Michele Steinfeld and Bruce Randy Steinfeld, Fam. Law Section, ABA (2018) (4th Ed., 2018).

Collier Family Law and the Bankruptcy Code. A practice-oriented guide examining the impact of the Bankruptcy Code on family law issues, authored by Henry J. Sommer, co-Editor-in-Chief of Collier on Bankruptcy, the preeminent treatise on bankruptcy law, and Hon. Margaret Dee McGarity, United States Bankruptcy Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. This is an add-on to my Lexis subscription.

Parental Alienation—

- [*Don’t Alienate the Kids! Raising Resilient Children While Avoiding High Conflict Divorce*](#), Bill Eddy, LCSW, J.D., High Conflict Institute Press (Revised 10-year Anniversary Ed., 2020).
- [*Divorce Poison: How to Protect Your Family from Bad-mouthing and Brainwashing*](#), William Morrow Paperbacks (2010).
- *Splitting: Protecting Yourself While Divorcing Someone with Borderline or Narcissistic Personal Disorder*, Kreger, Randi (2nd Ed., 2021) This second edition of *Splitting* includes new chapters on abuse, alienation, and false allegations; as well as information about the four types of domestic violence, protective orders, and child custody disputes.

Premarital Agreements—

Premarital Agreements: Drafting and Negotiation, Third Edition, Linda Ravdin (Aug, 10, 2013), ABA.

Evidence—

- “*Illinois Evidence with Objections*,” Revised 6th Edition (2020), Gino DiVito, Anthony J. Bocchino, David A. Sonenshein, Gino L. DiVito, James P. Carey, Martin D. Snyder.

- *Graham’s Handbook of Illinois Evidence* (2022). The 2016 edition marked the conversion of the Handbook, first published in 1956, to an annual softcover format. Read the 2022 update for cases such as the case holding that there is no presumption of delivery associated with certified mail. The 2022 Handbook addresses:

Ill.R.Evid. 613(c). The 2019 amendment regarding evidence of prior consistent statement for rehabilitation only by allowing admission of a hearsay statement otherwise admissible.

Ill.R.Evid. 803(8). Hearsay exception allowing introduction into evidence in a civil case a legally authorized investigation but not the findings containing expressions of opinions or drawing of conclusions.

Ill.R.Evid. 902(12) now provides for self-authentication of certified records generated by an electronic process or system as well as (13) involving certified data copied from electronic sources.

- *The Family Law Trial Evidence Handbook: Rules and Procedures for Effective Advocacy*, Steven N. Peskind, Fam. Law Section, ABA (2013).

- *Illinois Objections*, Gerald F. Grubb and Daniel Locallo, James Publishing.

Trial Practice—

Cross-Examination: Science and Techniques, Third Edition. Pozner & Dodd. Lexis Law Publishing. <https://store.lexisnexis.com/products/crossexamination-science-and-techniques-skuusSku6893>.

The Family Law Trial Evidence Handbook: Rules and Procedures for Effective Advocacy, Steven Peskind, ABA (2015).

The Divorce Trial Manual: From Initial Interview to Closing Argument, Second Edition Steven Peskind, ABA (2021).

Parental Allocation and Experts—

Psychological Experts in Divorce, Seventh Edition. Aspen Law & Business. Marc J. Ackerman and Andrew W. Kane, Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory U.S., (2020).
<https://lrus.wolterskluwer.com/store/product/psychological-experts-in-divorce-actions-seventh-edition/>.

Modern Child Custody Practice (2nd Ed.) Prof. Jeff Atkinson, Michie (Release 22, 2020).

The Hague Abduction Convention: Practical Issues and Procedures for Family Lawyers, 3rd Ed., Jeremy D Morley, ABA (2021).

Collaborative Divorce—

- *Collaborative Law: Achieving Effective Resolution in Divorce without Litigation*, Third Edition, Pauline Tesler, ABA Publishing (2016).
- *Building a Successful Collaborative Family Law Practice*, Editors: Adam Brian Cordover, Forrest S Mosten. Fam. Law Section, ABA (2018). (This book provides a roadmap for lawyers trained in collaborative divorce seeking a resource to build a collaborative practice).

Negotiation—

- *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, Fisher, Ury and Patton, Penguin. This book presents the principled approach to negotiations. Read this together with *Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations*. Revised Ed. (2007). It outlines the five barriers to cooperation: your reaction, their emotion, their position, their dissatisfaction, and their power. The remainder of his books supplement this core reading, including *Getting to Yes with Yourself*, in essence a prequel to his fundamental text.
- [*Beyond Reason: Using Your Emotions as You Negotiate*](#), Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro (2006).
- [*Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*](#), Douglas Stone (2010) and [*Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*](#), Third Edition (2021).
- [*High Conflict People in Legal Disputes*](#), Fourth Printing Edition. Bill Eddy, High Conflict Institute Press, 2nd Edition, revised and updated (2016).
- [*Mediating High-Conflict Disputes: A Breakthrough Approach with Tips and Tools and the New Ways for Mediation*](#), Bill Eddy and Michael Lomax (2011).

Communication—

- [*So, What's Your Proposal?: Shifting High-Conflict People from Blaming to Problem-Solving in 30 Seconds!*](#), Bill Eddy (2014).
- [*Calming Upset People with EAR: How Statements Showing Empathy, Attention, and Respect Can Quickly Defuse a Conflict*](#), Bill Eddy (2021).
- [*BIFF for Lawyers and Law Offices: Your Guide to Respectful, Written Communication*](#), Bill Eddy, Unhooked Books (2024).

Impact of Trauma on Clients and Their Children's Lives—

- [*The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*](#), Bessel van der Kolk M.D (2015). I read this book when it came out. Remarkably, it remained number one for eight years after its publication on the New York Times non-fiction paperback fiction. As of 2023 it was on the list for 234 weeks. See also: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/24/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-van-der-kolk.html> “This Conversation Will Change How You Think about Trauma,” The Ezra Klein Show, The New York Times.
- [*The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Trauma and Adversity*](#), Nadine Burke Harris (2018). I had the author lecture for the AAML Illinois' 13th Annual Columbus Day Seminar. She did a remarkable job in her 1.5-hour presentation describing Adverse Childhood Experiences and the continuing impact on our clients' lives and the lives of their children.

Recommended for Client's Reading—

[*BIFF for Co-parent Communication: Your Guide to Difficult Texts, Emails, and Social Media Posts*](#), Bill Eddy (November 2020). Author: I give this book out to clients quite and always have several copies readily at hand.

[*Splitting: Protecting Yourself While Divorcing Someone with Borderline or Narcissistic Personality Disorder*](#) (2021), Bill Eddy and Randi Kreger (co-author of *Stop Walking on Eggshells*, also an excellent book).

Legal Writing—

- [*BIFF for CoParent Communication: Your Guide to Difficult Texts, Emails, and Social Media Posts*](#), Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq., (2020).
- [*Garner on Language and Writing*](#), American Bar Association, Bryan A. Garner (2009).
- [*Garner's Modern English Usage*](#), Bryan A. Garner, Oxford University Press; 6th Ed. (2022). Using David Foster Wallace's words, Garner's discussion of rhetoric and style “borders on genius.”
- [*Legal Writing in Plain English*](#), Bryan A. Garner (University of Chicago Press, 3rd Ed.)
- [*The Winning Brief: 100 Tips for Persuasive Briefing in Trial and Appellate Courts*](#), 3d Edition, Bryan A. Garner, Oxford University Press (2014).
- [*Garner's Guide to Drafting and Editing Contracts*](#), Bryan A. Garner, (West Academic, 2020).
- [*Plain English for Lawyers*](#), 7th Ed., Richard Wydick and Amy Sloan (2024), Carolina Academic Press, LLC. Consider this book your starting place. Teacher's Manual available.
- [*Garner's The Redbook: A Manual on Legal Style*](#), 5th ed. (2023), West Academic. The book is the legal writer's equivalent of the AP Stylebook or the Chicago Manual of Style.

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