Writing Guidelines

Table of Contents

Voice

SitePoint's voice for the business and marketing channel is that of a journalistic feature writer, who spices up their articles with wit, personal anecdotes and expert interviews, data and research. She:

- Is positive
- Is informed
- Is, at appropriate times, witty
- Encourages next steps (calls-to-actions - CTAs)
- Is experienced in marketing and/or writing
- Is technical

Be Objective and Impartial

With few exceptions, the business and marketing content is journalism quality, appearing at all times unbiased and without sales and gimmicks.

How we can be objective and impartial

- Interview and link to industry experts and other qualified sources

- Link back/reference industry news, trends, reports, research and data findings
- Write case studies
- Write in third person, for some articles (others will require first person, such as personal/company insight stories)
- At the end of the article, where we insert our CTA, is the ONLY time we will ask our reader to do something for our benefit throughout the article.

The Article Structure

The Lede (Intro)
Your first two sentences are the most important of the article. See examples of good article ledes here, here, here or here. Okay, okay, last one.

- Begin with an anecdote. See examples of my writing here, here and here.
- Use compelling quotes, data/stats and stories to reel people in

Conclusions/Kickers (End)
- Briefly summarize the article
- Suggest next steps (CTA) - What do you want the reader to do after finishing your article?
- Create a bullet-point list of key takeaways (optional)

General
- If you've done thorough research, the "meat" of the article writes itself.
- Avoid using adverbs and passive voice. Download http://hemingwayapp.com or http://draftin.com or http://writer.pro/ for easy highlighting of adverbs and passive voice.
- Use the Hemingway App or http://draftin.com to find:
  - Excessively long sentences.
  - Adverbs.
  - Passive voice.
- **Say things in the most concise way possible. Less is more.**
- Don't make general statements without backing it up with evidence and research.
- Helpful articles:
  - Words that convert readers
  - Write better content faster

Research Guidelines
- Be exhaustive - check 20 pages of Google search results (if not more!)
- Collect compelling data points, facts, quotes and anecdotes.
- Always check social sites like Reddit and Quora to get perspectives from experts and students alike.
- Cite research and interview sources with hyperlinks. Also utilize AP Style Guide best practices for citing sources.

- According to,...
- "Quote," Learnable Creative Director Ashlee Simpson, said. "long quote."
- "Short quote," Apple Founder Steve Jobs, said.
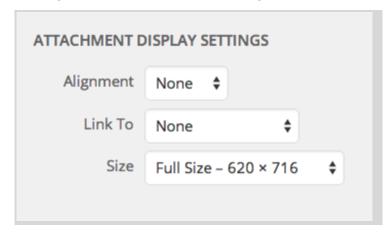
Grammar and Punctuation
- See AP Style Guide

Post Formatting
- Blogs' writing styles we want to copy:
  - [Kissmetrics Blog](#) or [Quicksprout](#)
    - How-tos
    - # Tips/Hacks/Resources…,
    - In-depth tutorials
    - Infographics
    - Innovative ideas/advice
  - [GrooveHq Blog](#):
    - Insightful case studies
    - Honest anecdotes that offer valuable insights/to-dos
    - [Long list posts](#)
    - Innovative ideas/advice
  - **[BufferApp Blog](#)**
    - [Here's a great example post](#) because it shows our readers how to do something that will make them more money and provide them with an added skill
- **Articles on how-to format blog posts correctly**
  - http://www.searchenginejournal.com/appearance-matters-how-to-format-your-blog-posts-for-social-linkbait-success/49116/
  - http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-choose-blogging-post-format-ht
  - http://www.copyblogger.com/formatting-wordpress-posts/
  - http://bloggerabroad.com/format-blog-post/
- Blog posts should be easily scannable by the reader, allowing them to understand the entire article just by skimming your sub-headings.
  - Use Sub-headings
    - H2, H3, H4, etc.
  - Utilize lots of white space
  - Keep it simple
  - Use bullets
  - IMAGES
  - Grafs should be 1-3 sentences at the maximum.

- Write a brief overview of the article so readers can see if they want to click-through to the actual article or not.
- Highlight "Tweetables" throughout your article.

Images/Graphics

- Source. Never use photos from another website without permission.
- Create your own images in:
  - [Canva](#)
  - [Piktochart](#)
  - [Pablo](#)
- Take screenshots for how-to articles
- Utilize unsplash.com or startupstockphotos.com for good images (free)
- Stay away from the use of cheesy stock photos.
- Examples of images/graphics we LOVE:
  - Gifs: http://www.lynda.com/articles/get-a-job/
  - Infographics: https://blog.kissmetrics.com/infographics/
  - Interactive content: http://ceros.com/examples/
  - Good post: http://www.copyblogger.com/powerful-images/
- LOVE FLAT, CLEAN design
- Meta Data
  - Title
    - Put an image title.
  - Description.
    - Put a image description in the Alt Text Field.
  - Caption.
    - Always use a caption that either describes the image or relates to the content of where it is placed in the article.
  - No Links.
    - Images should NOT link to the image itself.

Links
- Hyperlinked text should provide some basic context of the page to which it leads (ie. "Web development courses" is clearer than "web dev.")
- Always open link in new tab.

Overview: Social Media

Blog writers should try to write short potential messages for our social media manager.
We should paste these draft messages into Trello cards. Please remember to tag the names of @laurenholliday…

We writers know our articles intimately. We know the best lines. So we want you to take out some of those best lines from your articles, and rewrite them into short, shareable messages, such as Coschedule does in its posts.

How to write compelling social media messages that get shared:
- [The ideal length of social media posts](#)
- [Social media headlines](#) & [Emotional Headlines](#)
- Social media campaign [examples](#) from former client campaign successes

Most shared words on social media:
- Persuasive words
- **Best words on share on Facebook**
    - In general
        - Post
        - Take
        - Would
        - Submit
        - Tell Us
        - Amuses
        - Deals
        - Comment
        - Inspires
        - Discount
        - Warns
        - When
        - Where
        - Should
    - For a contest/promotion
        - Use:
            - Winner
            - Win

- - - Winning
      - Events
    - Avoid
      - Contest
      - Promotion
      - Sweepstakes
      - Coupon
  - **Best words on share on Twitter for Retweets**
    - Help
    - Great
    - Post
    - How To
    - ReTweet
    - Please
    - Media
    - Blog
    - You
    - 10
    - Social
    - Top
    - Twitter
    - Social Media
    - Check Out
    - New Blog Post
    - Follow
    - Free
    - Please
  - **Best words on share on G+**
    - Share
    - Promote
    - Create
    - Discover

Submission Guidelines

- Word count should be:
  - Regular articles: 800 to 1,000 words
  - Tutorials/In-depth posts: 1200+
- **Submit as a Google Doc**
- 2-3 inline links are acceptable when directly useful to the reader—but we'll remove any promotional or unnatural links.
- If you're a new author, submit to me a 2-3 line author bio including:
  - Links to your website, blog, and social media profiles

- ○ Your Twitter handle or LinkedIn profile
- ○ A photo, saved as a JPG or PNG
- ○ Your Discourse username

Other helpful docs:
- [How to get blog post ideas](#)
- [Lede how-to](#)