

WELCOME TO THE GITCOIN CONTENT STYLE GUIDE - *WORKING VERSION*

This is meant to be a practical guide laying out how to write well for Gitcoin so that we engage, inform, and inspire our most important audiences and potential allies. It helps us write clear and consistent content across teams and channels.

This is for everyone writing on behalf of Gitcoin, even if you wouldn't call yourself a writer. We all create an impression through the words and visuals we use, whether we do this intentionally or not.

We've divided the guide by topic based on the types of content we publish, so you can reference it as needed or browse in order.

TL;DR - READ THIS FIRST

Heads up! It might be challenging if it's your first go, but please feel free to contact @mathildaDV, our Content Manager, if you need a thinking partner/coach to help you work through something!

General Copywriting Tips

Here are a few key elements of writing Gitcoin's voice. For more, see the Grammar and mechanics section.

- **Active voice:** Use active voice. Avoid passive voice.
- **Avoid slang and jargon:** Write in plain English.
- **Write positively:** Use positive language rather than negative language.
- Always use **American English**
- We use the **Oxford Comma**
- Speak about Gitcoin as “**we**,” but not from a place of wanting to sell. We are here to inform and inspire.
- We **do not use** ... in content.
- How we render specific terms:
 - web3 *not* Web3
 - dApp
 - Gitcoin *not* GitCoin
- For longer form pieces, **after Gitcoin is used in a product name (e.g., Gitcoin Grants Stack) once, it can be dropped**
 - **Examples:**
 - Gitcoin Grants Stack the first time → Grants Stack when mentioned again
 - Gitcoin's Allo Protocol the first time → Allo Protocol when mentioned again
 - Gitcoin's Passport Protocol the first time → Passport Protocol when mentioned again
 - **Exceptions:**
 - When introducing Gitcoin Passport the tool (not the protocol), always use Gitcoin Passport to avoid causing confusion
 - When introducing Gitcoin Grants, always say Gitcoin Grants
- See [Gitcoin Glossary of Terms](#)

Before writing anything, always consider the following:

Goals

- Summary of what you are creating
- What KPIs are you trying to move?
- What OKR does this support?
- Why are you creating this specifically? Why did you choose this path?

Audience

1. **Early Stage Web3 Project Builders** (aka our Grantees like Dream DAO, PsyDAO)
2. **Leaders of Established, Influential Web3 Organizations Who Seek To Grow Their Ecosystem by Tapping their Community** (e.g. Polygon, Optimism, Fantom)
3. **Everyday Ideologically-Aligned Supporters** (who care about some combination of: open source, regen web3, DAOs, Ethereum, democracy innovation, incentive design, etc)

For an in-depth analysis of the above three audiences, please refer to [The Three Audiences MMM Should Care About](#).

Before creating content:

- Who is this for? Include enough detail to help segment or target on the channels you'll use (e.g. email, social ads).
- Are you targeting multiple audiences? List primary, secondary, and tertiary and non-audiences too.

Creative & Unique POV

- Explain what makes this work truly unique and how it will stand out
- Unique takeaway or point of view
- How does this add value for your audience?
- Creative requirements for supporting design (if relevant)

Channels & Distribution

- Where is this going/what is this? (e.g. blog, web content, event)
- How is it being distributed? (e.g. email, social, SEO)
- Will this link to existing assets & which ones?

Writing Goals & Principles

Our messaging has the power to unlock an emotional connection between us and the wider ecosystem of contributors and users.

With all of our messaging, we must ensure:

- It reflects our values
- It reflects how we perceive ourselves and will shape how others perceive us
- It has the power to motivate others to join us or to use our products
- It is clear enough to resonate with all of our identified audiences (from the web3 experts to the web3 newbies)

[Please see our Brand Book here for further clarification around our Mission, Vision and Values](#)

In order to achieve those goals, we make sure our content is:

- Clear. Understand the topic you're writing about. Use simple words and sentences.
- Useful. Before you start writing, ask yourself: What purpose does this serve? Who is going to read it? What do they need to know?
- Friendly. Write like a human. Don't be afraid to break a few rules if it makes your writing more relatable. All of our content, from splashy homepage copy to system alerts, should be warm and human.
- Appropriate. Write in a way that suits the situation. Just like you do in face-to-face conversations, adapt your tone depending on who you're writing to and what you're writing about.

Voice & Tone

One way we write empowering content is by being aware of our voice and our tone. This section explains the difference between voice and tone, and lays out the elements of each as they apply to Gitcoin.

What's the difference between voice and tone? Think of it this way: You have the same voice all the time, but your tone changes.

The same is true for Gitcoin. Our voice doesn't change much from day to day, but our tone changes often, depending on our audience.

All of this means that when we write copy:

- We are **intentional**. We understand the world our community are living in: one muddled by hyperbolic language, upsells, and over-promises. We strip all that away in favor of clarity. Because communities come to Gitcoin to fund their shared needs, we avoid distractions like fluffy metaphors and cheap plays to emotion.
- We are **genuine**. We understand what it takes to build a web3 community because we have done and are doing so. That means we relate to the challenges and passions faced by budding collectives and speak to them in a **familiar, warm, and accessible** way.
- We are **informative**. Only experts can make what's difficult look easy, and it's our job to demystify web3-speak and actually educate. As translators, we avoid the overly academic.
- We are **dry-humored**. Our sense of humor is straight-faced, subtle, and a touch eccentric. We're weird but not inappropriate, smart but not snobbish. We prefer winking to shouting. We're never condescending or exclusive—we always bring our frens in on the joke.

Our tone is usually informal, but it's always more important to be clear than entertaining. When you're writing, consider the reader's state of mind. Are they relieved to be finished with a campaign? Are they confused and seeking our help on Twitter? Once you have an idea of their emotional state, you can adjust your tone accordingly.

NB: We try to steer away from us speaking purely about Gitcoin. When you're thinking of writing for any particular audience, think through the lens of empowering the community through what we're writing. What problem are we solving for *them*? We empower communities. Let's make sure our voice echos that.

Brand Vernacular

See [Gitcoin Glossary of Terms](#)

Grammar & Mechanics

Abbreviations and acronyms

If there's a chance your reader won't recognize an abbreviation or acronym, spell it out the first time you mention it. Then use the short version for all other references. If the abbreviation isn't clearly related to the full version, specify in parentheses.

Active voice

Use active voice. Avoid passive voice. In active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action. In passive voice, the subject of the sentence has the action done to it.

Capitalization

We use a few different forms of capitalization. Title case capitalizes the first letter of every word except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. Sentence case capitalizes the first letter of the first word.

Contractions

They're great! They give your writing an informal, friendly tone.

Emoji

Emoji are a fun way to add humor and visual interest to your writing, but use them infrequently and deliberately.

Numbers

Spell out a number when it begins a sentence. Otherwise, use the numeral. This includes ordinals.

Apostrophes

The apostrophe's most common use is making a word possessive. If the word already ends in an s and it's singular, you also add an 's. If the word ends in an s and is plural, just add an apostrophe.

Colons

Use a colon (rather than an ellipsis, em dash, or comma) to offset a list.

Commas

When writing a list, use the serial comma (also known as the Oxford comma).

Dashes and hyphens

Use a hyphen (-) without spaces on either side to link words into single phrase, or to indicate a span or range.

Ellipses

Ellipses (...) can be used to indicate that you're trailing off before the end of a thought. Use them sparingly. Don't use them for emphasis or drama, and don't use them in titles or headers.

Periods

Periods go inside quotation marks. They go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside parentheses when the parenthetical stands alone.

Question marks

Question marks go inside quotation marks if they're part of the quote. Like periods, they go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside parentheses when the parenthetical stands alone.

Exclamation points

Use exclamation points sparingly, and never more than one at a time. They're like high-fives: A well-timed one is great, but too many can be annoying. Exclamation points go inside quotation marks. Like periods and question marks, they go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside parentheses when the parenthetical stands alone.

Quotation marks

Use quotes to refer to words and letters, titles of short works (like articles and poems), and direct quotations. Periods and commas go within quotation marks. Question marks within quotes follow logic—if the question mark is part of the quotation, it goes within. If you're asking a question that ends with a quote, it goes outside the quote. Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

Ampersands

Don't use ampersands unless one is part of a company or brand name.

Pronouns

If your subject's gender is unknown or irrelevant, use "they," "them," and "their" as a singular pronoun. Use "he/him/his" and "she/her/her" pronouns as appropriate. Don't use "one" as a pronoun.

Quotes

When quoting someone in a blog post or other publication, use the present tense.

States, cities, and countries

Spell out all city and state names. Don't abbreviate city names.

URLs and websites

Capitalize the names of websites and web publications. Don't italicize.

Slang and jargon

Write in plain English. If you need to use a technical term, briefly define it so everyone can understand.

Text formatting

Use italics to indicate the title of a long work (like a book, movie, or album) or to emphasize a word.

Write positively

Use positive language rather than negative language. One way to detect negative language is to look for words like "can't," "don't," etc.

Writing for Accessibility

Basics

We write for a diverse audience of readers who all interact with our content in different ways. We aim to make our content accessible to anyone using a screen reader, keyboard navigation, or Braille interface, and to users of all cognitive capabilities.

As you write, consider the following:

- Would this language make sense to someone who doesn't work here?
- Could someone quickly scan this document and understand the material?

- If someone can't see the colors, images or video, is the message still clear?
- Is the markup clean and structured?
- Mobile devices with accessibility features are increasingly becoming core communication tools, does this work well on them?

Many of the best practices for writing for accessibility echo those for writing educational content, with the added complexity of markup, syntax, and structure.

Guidelines

- Avoid directional language
- Avoid directional instructions and any language that requires the reader to see the layout or design of the page. This is helpful for many reasons, including layout changes on mobile.

Employ a hierarchy

Put the most important information first. Place similar topics in the same paragraph, and clearly separate different topics with headings.

Starting with a simple outline that includes key messages can help you create a hierarchy and organize your ideas in a logical way. This improves scannability and encourages better understanding.

Make true lists instead of using a paragraph or line breaks.

Label forms

Label inputs with clear names, and use appropriate tags. Think carefully about what fields are necessary, and especially which ones you mark as required. Label required fields clearly. The shorter the form, the better.

Use descriptive links

Links should provide information on the associated action or destination. Try to avoid "click here" or "learn more."

Use plain language

Write short sentences and use familiar words. Avoid jargon and slang. If you need to use an abbreviation or acronym that people may not understand, explain what it means on first reference.

Use alt text

The alt tag is the most basic form of image description, and it should be included on all images. The language will depend on the purpose of the image:

- If it's a creative photo or supports a story, describe the image in detail in a brief caption.
- If the image is serving a specific function, describe what's inside the image in detail. People who don't see the image should come away with the same information as if they had.
- If you're sharing a chart or graph, include the data in the alt text so people have all the important information.
- Each browser handles alt tags differently. Supplement images with standard captions when possible.

Make sure closed captioning is available

Closed captioning or transcripts should be available for all videos. The information presented in videos should also be available in other formats.

Be mindful of visual elements

Aim for high contrast between your font and background colors. Tools in the resources section should help with picking accessible colors.

Images should not be the only method of communication, because images may not load or may not be seen. Avoid using images when the same information could be communicated in writing.

Writing for (or About) People of Gitcoin

Who are we? We are a collective of people who have come together in fulfillment of a shared mission to make it easier for people to access funds proportional to their value creation. We're making an impact, sharing our wins and losses with each other, and elevating others.

We write the same way we build apps: with a person-first perspective. Whether you're writing for an internal or external audience, it's important to write for and about other people in a way that's compassionate, inclusive, and respectful. Being aware of the impact of your language will help make Mailchimp a better place to work and a better steward of our values in the world. In this section we'll lay out some guidelines for writing about people with compassion, and share some resources for further learning.

Gender and sexuality

Use the following words as modifiers, but never as nouns:

- lesbian
- gay
- bisexual
- transgender (never "transgendered")
- trans
- queer
- LGBT

When writing about a person, use their communicated pronouns. When in doubt, just ask or use their name.

Heritage and nationality

Don't use hyphens when referring to someone with dual heritage or nationality. For example, use "Asian American" instead of "Asian-American."

Race

When we write about a culture or ethnicity, we capitalize the name. For example, we capitalize Black as it refers to Americans in the African diaspora while we keep white lowercase since white refers to the color of a person's skin and not a group of people.

Language Translation

We try to write all of our content in standard, straightforward English that can be understood by users with limited English proficiency. It's much easier for a translator to clearly communicate ideas written in straightforward, uncomplicated sentences. Here are some guiding principles for writing for international audiences:

- Use active voice. We always aim for this, but it's especially important when writing for translation.
- Use the subject-verb-object sentence structure. It's not used by all languages, but it's widely recognized.

- Use positive words when talking about positive situations. For example, because a question like “Don’t you think she did a great job?” begins with a negative word, a non-native English speaker may interpret its implication as negative. A better version would be “She did a good job, right?”

Writing for Knowledge Base

**Make sure you’ve reviewed the general copywriting tips in this style guide before you continue.*

Audience: Assume that the audience has **no previous knowledge**. We’re answering questions in the most clear, concise way possible.

Article length: No more than 500 words, maximum. *We have found that the majority of people come to the articles from a link or a search. If someone searches for something, and it’s lost in a 2,000 word article, people tend to bounce really quickly from the longer posts.*

Tone: Definitive, but friendly and helpful.

Style: Don’t solely rely on text. Use a lot of visual examples, such as screenshots and Loom videos wherever possible.

**Pick a few different pages that we’re happy with, and then use those as templates moving forward.*

NAMING:

Writing for Blog

**Make sure you’ve reviewed the general copywriting tips in this style guide before you continue.*

Ideal word lengths (these remain very flexible):

Research-heavy +1 article: 1,000 +

Research-heavy article: 800-1,000

Shorter, more condense article: 500 - 800 words

Audience: Always make sure that you know which audience you are writing for.

Images: All featured images to be pulled or created from the Gitcoin design team or databases. All header images should be sized 2:1.

Headings:

Subheadings: Always separate your content by using subheadings. In Hubspot, if you are uploading a blog, please always use Heading 6.

Attributions: *Always* spell names correctly. If you’re unsure, look it up! And it’s important to make sure that you stay consistent throughout the blog. For example, if you choose to render a name as 1inch and not 1inch Network (it could be either), ensure it’s consistent in the entire article.

Quotes:

Use descriptive links

Links should provide information on the associated action or destination. Try to avoid “click here” or “learn more.” For blog posts, we always try to link out wherever possible and relevant.

NAMING:

Writing for Emails

**Make sure you've reviewed the general copywriting tips in this style guide before you continue.*

Basics

Our email newsletters help empower and inform Gitcoin community members. Here are the most common types of content we send by email:

- Product and feature announcements
- Tips for getting the most out of existing products and features
- Regular monthly newsletters
- Automated series
- Event invitations
- Internal newsletters
- Donor solicitation

Guidelines

Email newsletters generally follow the style points outlined in the Voice and tone and Grammar and mechanics sections. Here are some additional considerations.

Consider all elements

Every email newsletter is made up of the following elements. Make sure they're all in place before clicking send:

From name

This is usually the company or team's name. It identifies the sender in the recipient's inbox.

Subject line

Keep your subject line descriptive. There's no perfect length, but some email clients display only the first words. Tell—don't sell—what's inside. Subject lines should be in the sentence case. (Note that this is different from a headline, which you may want to include in the campaign itself.)

Preview text

The top line of your campaign appears beside each subject line in the inbox. Provide the info readers need when they're deciding if they should open.

Body copy

Keep your content concise. Write with a clear purpose, and connect each paragraph to your main idea. Supplement our content with imagery as often as possible.

Call to action

Make the next step clear. Whether you're asking people to buy something, read something, share something, or respond to something, offer a clear direction to close your message so readers know what to do next.

Footer

All campaigns follow CAN-SPAM rules. Include an unsubscribe link, mailing address, and permission reminder in the footer of each newsletter.

Consider your perspective

When sending an email newsletter from Gitcoin, use the 3rd person “we.” When sending a newsletter as an individual, use the 1st person.

Use a hierarchy

Most readers will be scanning your emails or viewing them on a small screen. Put the most important information first.

Include a call to action

Make the reader's next step obvious, and close each campaign with a call to action. Link to a blog post, program registration, or signup page. You can add a button or include a text link in the closing paragraph.

Avoid unnecessary links

More than 50 percent of emails are read on a mobile device. Limit links to the most important resources to focus your call to action and prevent errant taps on smaller screens.

- It's a good practice to always preview the email both for desktop and mobile to make sure it renders correctly.

Use alt text

Some email clients disable images by default. Include an alt tag to describe the information in the image for people who aren't able to see it.

Writing for Social Media

What not to do:

- Fatigue people's attention
 - Watch out for excessive exclamation points & caps lock
 - Avoid excess posting outside of grants rounds
- Reduce the potential reach of content by posting too frequently
 - General guideline: wait ~30 minutes between posts when possible
- Undermine Gitcoin's credibly neutral reputation in favoring particular organizations

What to do well:

- Write in a conversational voice of authority – think both accessible and friendly, but also trustworthy; social channels are a place for conversations that are manifestations of upstream ideas, initiatives, projects coming out of Gitcoin
 - Do your research to ensure that the information shared is accurate, and that any analysis that is done is rigorous
 - Partner with relevant stakeholders within Gitcoin for their perspective and expertise, while helping them craft and adapt their message/narratives for optimal social distribution and engagement
- Stewards folks' attention thoughtfully while creating attention-drawing content
 - Clear, concise, interesting copy

- Secondary social content (developed around Bitcoin-native or otherwise longer form content) should condense longer content into high-level takeaways, notable/important details to highlight, and any important calls to action
- Bookend longer threads with most relevant/interesting information at the beginning and end
- Visuals -For important posts especially, but also in general, include interesting (but not excessive) visuals – at the least, emojis, but also, images, videos, animations, GIFs
- Write with a specific audience or audiences in mind – and create invitations to participate
 - Twitter currently is a large channel that speaks to all three: grantee, contributor/donor, partner – in certain cases, like Grants Round recaps, we may speak to all three audiences (in clearly delineated sections), but most often in any given instance of a social post (for ex, on Twitter, a single tweet or thread), we focus on a particular audience
 - When speaking to an audience, also try to create opportunities, “portals,” invitations to participate – if speaking to pre-existing grantees, we can also link to grantee onboarding resources that can activate interested on-lookers to participate as well
- Help our audiences sensemake, serve as a cartographer of the vast web of Bitcoin’s people & projects (and longer-term, serve as a cartographer of Web3)
 - Build an interconnected web of content – link & reference back to other content when relevant
 - On Twitter – QT past threads/tweets; tag partners; link back to old blog posts
 - Provide how-to resources & directions to particular places (Discord channel, blog posts) that help people get started
 - For ex: grant resources for grantees; grant explorer / wallet how-tos for donors; how to apply for a Discord role for folks interested in DAO Vibes calls

Key things to remember/consider:

- Social media is inundated with perspectives and voices, and inundated with asks of people’s attention. Each time we post on Twitter, we make a tiny, implicit ask of people’s attention – in the spirit of that, (and in Twitter’s character limit, lol), every word matters
- Think about who you want to reach, and what result you want from reaching them (what do you want them to do, or how do you want to impact them through your content?)
- Twitter is our highest-visibility and most public channel (where most people first encounter us) – how can we make positive and impactful first-impressions, as a leading organization in Web3 (and then, an organization people look to for a pulse on what is happening in crypto?)

Writing for Product - COMING SOON

General Tips

- Product copy should be relatively dry and straightforward
- Keep it simple and to the point with little room for interpretation

Audience Specific

- For Non-Technical Builders
 - Avoid technical jargon
- For Non-Technical Partners
 - Avoid technical jargon
- For Developers
 - Technical language ok

Writing for Web - COMING SOON

Writing for UX - COMING SOON