The Melanin Village Content Style Guide

Use this to help you write in The Melanin Village's brand voice. This is a living document that can change as The Melanin Village (TMV) grows.

Voice and Tone

- **Brand Characteristics - the impression we want people to take away after any experience with The Melanin Village**

Friendly, Approachable	We make all Sisters and future Sisters feel welcome and supported
Warm	We provide a safe space/community for all members to learn about homeschooling, regardless of experience and/or background in the realm

- **And these for the business**

Professional	We help everyone feel that the organization is reliable with a clear mission for its members
Authoritative	We help everyone feel empowered with a sense of achievement
Informative	We provide understanding regarding the challenges of homeschooling and provide knowledge and practices to aid with them

- **Conversational Style**

  TMV's tone is clear, informative, and approachable; encouraging communication as if one is having a one-to-one conversation with someone unfamiliar with online homeschooling.

- **Idioms**

  TMV is primarily based in the United States and uses the English language, so phrases such as "Break a leg" might be widely understood. However, to maintain a consistently professional and authoritative tone, phrases and statements should be concise and specific.

- **Emotion Words**

Choose from this list when pulling together copy for messages.

TMV uses uplifting and inspirational language when communicating with the Sister community. We aim to maintain these positive emotions consistently in feedback messages, whether they are success messages or error messages. Avoid jargon and use simple language.

- Success or Confirmation
  - Join Waitlist: Woohoo! You're now on the waitlist. Get ready for exclusive updates and exciting news!
  - First-time Sisters (Log in): You're in! Welcome to The Village.
  - Profile/Account updates: Your account has been successfully updated.
- Error
  - Login: The email and password entered did not match an account. Double-check and try again.
- 404 Errors
  - Titles:
    - Uh-oh…this page doesn't exist.
    - Page Not Found - We apologize for the inconvenience
  - Subtitles:
    - It seems like the page you were looking for has taken an unexpected detour.
  - *Suggestions:*
    - Return to the [Homepage](#) [link to homepage]
    - Check your URL for any typos or errors

Usage ([resources used](#))

Use clear, easy-to-understand, consistent language.

→ **Do**: The Melanin Village is a growth-centered gathering space that provides curriculum and community for Black and Brown homeschoolers.

→ **Don't**: The Melanin Village represents a developmental nexus that furnishes syllabus and camaraderie for Afro-American and ethnically diverse home-based pedagogues.

Use active voice.
- ➔ **Do**: Learn More
- ➔ **Don't**: More lessons can be learned by you.

- ➔ **Do**: Join Now
- ➔ **Don't**: The Melanin Village awaits you.

Never use all caps.
- ➔ **Do**: Join now or Join Now
- ➔ **Don't**: JOIN NOW

Write with authority and confidence, but be approachable and positive, like you're mentoring or guiding someone.

- ➔ **Do**: Your homeschool journey begins here. It's not about perfection; it's about progressing towards your vision. With resources for your whole family, early bird registration is open. We can't wait to welcome you!

- ➔ **Don't**: I guess your homeschool could maybe start here. It's not like it has to be perfect or anything. We've got some stuff for your family, and early bird registration is open. If you want to join, that's cool, I guess.

Write in the second person, like you're talking directly to someone.
- ➔ **Do**: Let's get you plugged in.
- ➔ **Don't**: Home school mothers are getting plugged in.

- ➔ **Do**: Wisdom and wit straight to your inbox
- ➔ **Don't**: Sisters get daily tips straight to their inboxes.

Accessibility Guidelines

Resources:
[A11y content style guide](#)
Writing for Accessibility - [Mail Chimp](#)
[NHS Accessibility Guidance for Content](#)

Paragraphs
- Write short sentences and use familiar words. Avoid jargon and slang.
- Write clear content that is easy to understand.
- Break up posts that span multiple areas and topics.
- Explain in the first sentence abbreviations and acronyms that are not widely understood.
- Try not to exceed a lower secondary reading level.
- Use a [Resource](#) to help calculate how complicated writing is.

Lists

- Use different types of lists to group information according to its nature to provide orientation for users.
  - Unordered lists are used when the order of the items is not relevant. List items in unordered lists are marked with a bullet.
  - Ordered lists are used for sequential information and are automatically enumerated by the browser.
  - Description lists are groups of related terms and descriptions which are connected programmatically.
- Individual list items can contain a variety of HTML elements, including paragraphs, headings, form elements, and other (nested) lists.

Links & Calls To Action
- Links and calls to action should provide clear information on the associated action or destination. Avoid "click here" or "learn more."
- Ideally link text should match the heading of the target page. If the target page heading is too long, shorten it but use words from it so that users can predict where the link will take them.
- Avoid having links or buttons open new windows or tabs. If you need to open a link in a new window, say this in the link phrase. For example, "Link name (opens in new window)".
- Avoid directional instructions and any language that requires the reader to see the layout or design of the page.
- Yes: "Select from these options" with step listed after the title
- No: "Select from the options in the right sidebar"

Images/Alt-text
- Alt-text is the most basic form of image description, and it should be included on all images. People who cannot see a meaningful image need an alternative to understand the content. You need to add "alt-text" to explain what's in the image. Alt-text is not usually visible but is read out by screen readers or displayed if an image does not load or if images have been switched off. The alt-text 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.
- Example of good vs bad alt-text ([via Hubspot](#)):
  - Bad: "alt="Woman pointing to a person's computer screen""
  - Good: ""alt="Business school professor pointing to a student's computer screen""

Fonts & colors
- Use colors with high contrast for font and background colors.
- Use tools such as [ColorSafe](#) for choosing accessible color combinations.

- Use bold and italic text styling sparingly, and when semantically appropriate. Long sections of text set with these text styles have been known to be a Dyslexia trigger.

Transcripts/closed captioning
- Ensure that closed captioning is available for all videos.
- Provide the information presented in videos in another format such as a transcript or blog post.

Label forms
- Label inputs with clear names and use appropriate tags.
- Consider which fields are necessary and which you mark as required.
- Clearly label required fields.
- Aim for a short form.

Set Page Titles
- A good page title helps users find what they want and recognize that they're in the right place. It's the link that shows in search results and the first thing a screen reader will read out when the user lands on a page.

- Each page title must be unique and descriptive. Keep it concise and consider putting important keywords near the beginning.

Glossary of Terms

A

Academy: a learning center for Village Sisters that provides personalized learning materials (e.g., lessons, practice, and quizzes) to meet their children's educational needs

B

BIPOC instructors: educators who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color

C

cheers: likes on Village posts and socials

Current Sister: a paid member with full access to the Melanin Village

Curriculum: Academy course content to help Sisters homeschool their children

D

Discount: a reduced rate paid for the cost of homeschooling at the Melanin Village

E

e:

F

Future Sister: a potential member

G

Give: to donate funds to support the Melanin Village and its families

H

Homeschooling: the education of children at home by their parent(s)/guardian(s)

I

i:

J

Juneteenth Reading Guide: books that teach the real history of how Black people were agents in their emancipation

K

k:

L

like: to show interest in a Village post

local group: three or more Village Sisters living in a common location with access to Village features (e.g., training, kids clubs, discounts, etc.)

M

m:

N

n:

O

Official Sister: a paid member with full access to the Melanin Village

P

p:

Q

q:

R

Road maps: learning paths and curriculum guidance

S

Sage School: coaching and support for Black and Brown homeschool mamas
Sister Ambassador: a paid member who is a leader in their community
Sister Pass Weekend: free weekend access to paid membership content
Sister-to-be: a potential member

T

t:

U

u:

V

Village Closed: Sisters-to-be can join the waitlist until membership is open again

Village Open: Sisters-to-be can join the Village during this time

Village Sister: a paid member with full access to the Melanin Village

Village resources: materials and support that come with access to the Melanin Village (e.g., community, training, discounts, etc.)

W

Workbooks: Homeschooling Guides for Sisters

X

x:

Y

y:

Z

z: