

**UX WRITERS**  
COLLECTIVE

# **UX Writing Checklist: Content Heuristics for Designers**

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For any phase of design, audit your screens and components against these content heuristics and best practices. Make a note of what needs revising, and track who will manage the updates.

# Overall best practices

- Readable**  
Is the text conversational, simple, and written at about a sixth-grade level? (Check your text: [Hemingwayapp](#))
- Concise**  
Are headlines and instruction text as short and clear as possible with no repetition, redundancy, ambiguity, or unnecessary words?
- Simple**  
Does the text explain complex features and define terms on first use in plain language?
- Universal**  
Does the word choice avoid technical jargon, idioms, and hard-to-translate phrases like "two peas in a pod"?
- Consistent**  
Do text elements or UI components of the same type use parallel patterns and styles?
- Logical**  
Does the ongoing text across screens have a discernible narrative progression that would make sense to anyone?
- Guiding**  
Is the next required action clearly stated at each screen?
- User-focused**  
Are user benefits & goals positively emphasized over company or product goals?
- Holistic**  
Does the text compliment the visual layout and illustrations and vice versa? (Is the sum greater than the parts?)
- Prioritized**  
If you squint at any screen, is the info hierarchy clear? Do the most important actions and info stand out?

# Voice, tone & terminology

- Empathetic**  
Is the tone generally upbeat and appropriate for the users' context and emotions at each step in the flow?
- On-brand**  
Do the grammar, terminology, phrasing and level of formality align with the company's brand voice principles?
- Consistent**  
Is terminology used consistently across the entire user experience including from marketing through support, between OSs and devices, and in companion products?
- Global-friendly**  
Is humor or whimsy culturally appropriate and universally relevant?
- Reliable**  
Is the speaker's point of view consistent, trustworthy, and reliable throughout the user journey with no POV switches?
- Correct**  
Have all spelling, grammar, capitalization, date and number formats been checked against the style guide?

# Error Messages

- Actionable**  
Does the error say what happened in simple terms and explain what the user needs to do next to get back on task?
- Compassionate**  
Do the language and the tone of the message match the severity of the issue and avoid blaming the user for the error?
- Proximal**  
Are the error messages close to the relevant field or component where the error occurred?  
(More info: [Closeness of Actions and Objects in GUI Design](#))

# Instructional text & tooltips

- Informative**  
Do users have enough info and guidance at every point in the flow to make a decision and continue with confidence?
- Prepared**  
Do users have enough context and info about consequences before beginning a multi-step task or taking a critical action?
- Reassuring**  
Are complex decision points (like data-sharing or purchase confirmations) addressed with enough reassuring guidance and info?
- Generous**  
Do tooltips provide additional details and info for users who need help understanding or who feel anxious?
- Supportive**  
Are users given easy paths to learn more using progressive disclosure and avoiding "dead ends" (no path to more info)?

# Notifications & Alerts

- Front-loaded**  
Do important phrases or words appear first in the message so that its meaning is clear to users even if truncated?
- Meaningful**  
Are notifications or alerts useful and relevant to the user at the moment they're presented?
- Appropriate**  
Is the tone of the notification appropriate for the user's context?
- User-focused**  
Where possible, are messages prioritized based on user needs not sales, marketing, or product team needs?
- Consistent**  
Do individual alerts and messages conform to an overall framework that uses consistent patterns for similar message types? (Should be consistent for each mode and device type)

# Onboarding (First-Use)

- Value-focused**  
Does the text show the user how to experience the value of the product as soon as possible?
- User-focused**  
Does the content focus on how the product will benefit users in solving their problem (and less on features or technical details)?
- Cohesive**  
Do the stated product benefits match the major selling points promised in marketing materials?
- Necessary**  
Do the initial screens convey only the essential info needed to inspire action and avoid any info not meaningful to first-time users?
- Reassuring**  
Does the onboarding content answer the user's most pressing questions and remove mystery or doubt on first use?
- Respectful**  
Before asking users to give access to data or grant permissions, are the reasons it's necessary and the benefits to the user explained?  
(More info: [The Right Ways to Ask Users for Permissions](#))

# Dialogs / Modals

- Direct**  
Does the headline ask a single, clear question or communicate a single concise message?
- Distinct**  
Does the primary button text state an unambiguous action and indicate what happens on-click?
- Explanatory**  
Does the body text clarify any consequences and explain options in simple terms?

# Dashboards

- Apparent**  
Is the info presented with appropriate visual emphasis so that important statistics, charts, and recommended actions stand out?
- Grouped**  
Is the data clearly and logically grouped and labeled?
- Intuitive**  
Is it easy for novice and advanced users alike to interpret data visualizations based on the headings, labels, and captions?
- Inclusive**  
Are complex concepts or industry terms explained with tooltips or linked help articles for unfamiliar users?
- Prioritized**  
Is it clear which dashboard actions are mandatory, recommended, or strictly optional?
- Evident**  
Are the sources of aggregated data accessible to users who want to explore details or better understand impact at the source?

# Empty States

- Positive**  
Does the message focus on user benefit and encourage progress toward a user goal?
- Explicit**  
Does the text explain exactly what action the user can take to fill the empty state?
- Holistic**  
Do the images and messaging complement each other and meet brand and tone guidelines?
- Indicative**  
Does the empty state provide the user with an indication of the data, info, or visual that will eventually occupy the space?

# Forms

- Logical**  
Are similar fields grouped together into sections?  
(More info: [How Chunking Helps Content Processing](#))
- Clear**  
Are fields and sections clearly and consistently labeled in language that's easy for anyone to understand?
- Unique**  
Viewed together as pairs, do the field labels and hint text avoid redundancy and serve separate, unique purposes?
- Helpful**  
Does hint text prevent errors by providing an example or instructions for complex formatting?
- Proactive**  
Are tooltips added next to any field label where users need more info or reassurance?
- Validating**  
Are field and data validation errors meaningfully focused on guiding users and correcting inputs?

# Transactional Emails

- Front-loaded**  
Is the most important idea or required action obvious from the main email heading?
- Pertinent**  
Does the email content get directly to the point? Is it obvious what the user needs to do and how they need to respond?
- Essential**  
Is every sentence of the body text necessary and is every bit of info meaningful to users?
- Concise**  
Is the subject line short (about 40 characters) and is any required action or urgency clear to users?
- Friendly**  
Is the tone of the email content respectful, easy to understand, positive and solution-oriented?
- Readable**  
Is the body text short and scannable with useful subheadings?
- Actionable**  
Are step-by-step instructions thorough and clear? Is the CTA easy to find and positioned near the top of the email?
- Consistent**  
Do the terms in the email match those used in the interface, in the support content or articles, and those preferred by users?
- Informative**  
Does the email tell users how to get more info, share feedback, or contact someone for more help?