13 Copywriting Tips to Improve Your Marketing

Good copywriting encourages people to take action. Whether the aim is to get people to subscribe to your mailing list, or buy your products or services, the way your message is delivered makes all the difference.

We’ve compiled a list of our top copywriting tips – the ones that can have the biggest impact on your marketing. If you’re looking to spruce up the words on your website, or magnetise the messages in your marketing materials, then this post is for you. Use it as a checklist of sorts, to ensure that your copy ticks all the boxes.

Make the most of the words on your website with these copywriting tips.
1. Write a Compelling Headline

As David Ogilvy famously said, only 20% of people read beyond the headline. In other words, it’s arguably the most important part of your copy. No matter how persuasive your body copy is, if your readers don’t get past your lacklustre headline, the rest is pretty much redundant.

A good headline compels the reader to read more. It grabs their attention, appeals to their interests and emotions and sparks their curiosity. Here are some headline writing formulas you can use to ensure that you arrive at the best one:

- The straight-to-the point headline: 12-Year-Old Graffiti Artist Hosts Her Third Exhibition.
- The intriguing headline: At 12 Years Old, She’s About to Host Her Third Art Exhibition and Her Fans Can’t Wait.
- The ‘brand new’ headline: It’s Here, The Brand-New Exhibition from London’s Favorite 12-Year-Old Graffiti Artist.
- The ‘big build up’ headline: It’s Finally Here, The Third Exhibition from London’s Favourite 12-Year-Old Graffiti Artist.
- The Storytelling headline: When Her Teachers Told Her That Her Artwork Wouldn’t Be Taken Seriously, Hannah Set Out to Prove Them Wrong...
If you want to come up with a brilliant headline, you need to put in the effort, and that means exploring every angle, and every combination of words. Very rarely is a headline written perfectly first time, it takes at least a dozen rewrites to make sure that it hits the nail on the head.

2. Know the Difference Between Your Features and Benefits

In a nutshell, a feature is what your product or service does, a benefit is the value your customers get from using it. For example, the main feature of a mobile phone might be that it has a long battery life, but the benefit is that you only need to charge it once every 4 days.

The saying goes ‘sell on the benefits, close on the features’. In most types of copy, it’s best to open with a benefit, so the reader knows the value of what you’re offering. Once you have their interest, run through the features that makes your product or service unique.

For a great example of how of how a feature, a benefit and a call to action can work together in as few words as possible, check out this billboard ad from Stand Up to Cancer:

Call to action: ‘sign up’, feature: ‘raise money’, benefit: ‘save lives’
This is also a great example of a piece of copy that breaks the rule of opening with a benefit.

3. Find Your Unique Selling Point (USP)

Uber’s unique selling points are time-saving and convenience

A Unique Selling Point is the one specific feature that differentiates your product or service from all the others. There are several ways to find your USP, including:

- Researching the competition and finding out what you do better.
- Targeting a specific niche that no-one else is dominating.
- Making a promise or guarantee that ensures ‘no risk’ to the customer.

Try to avoid using unfounded, or general claims like:

- ‘The leading furniture store’
- ‘The best furniture in the UK’
- ‘The largest collection of furniture’

Instead, use very specific selling points, based on actual evidence, that no other company in your industry can claim. For example:

- ‘Voted the UK’s best furniture store in 2017’
- ‘Sofas starting from £200’
• ‘700+ furniture items in counting’

A great example of a company that turned the idea of a unique selling point on its head, is Avis car hire, when they ran the following advert:

Avis is only No.2 in rent a cars. So why go with us?

We try damned hard. (When you’re not the biggest, you have to.) We just can’t afford dirty ashtrays. Or half-empty gas tanks. Or worn wipers. Or unwashed cars. Or low tires. Or anything less than seat-adjusters that adjust. Heaters that heat. Defrosters that defrost.

Obviously, the thing we try hardest for is just to be nice. To start you out right with a new car, like a lively, super-torque Ford, and a pleasant smile. To know, say, where you get a good pastrami sandwich in Duluth. Why? Because we can’t afford to take you for granted. Go with us next time. The line at our counter is shorter.

Even a negative can be a unique selling point, if executed well
4. Show Your Credibility with Social Proof

Have you ever noticed how tip jars in pubs and coffee shops are never empty, even from opening hours? That's because a few aptly-placed coins and notes from the owners themselves creates social proof and encourages people to follow suit.

One of the best ways to give your copy credibility is to demonstrate how your product or service has helped people before. A testimonial from a previous customer, a case study, or a snippet of a review you received can help strengthen your brand and gain people’s trust.

Laundrapp use video case studies to show their credibility and encourage new sign-ups

5. Speak Directly to Your Readers

One of the most effective ways to engage your audience is to speak to them in the second person, using ‘you’. You want your readers to feel like you’re speaking directly to them. Avoid the temptation to use ‘I’, ‘we’, or ‘they’ too much as your readers can lose interest when they can’t hear themselves in the conversation.

6. Use a Conversational Tone of Voice

In most cases, copywriting should be conversational in order to engage with its audience. It can be tempting to position your brand as a top provider by using high-brow, or academic language, but this approach can actually have the opposite effect.
Most people aren't used to reading sophisticated language. We're far more used to reading conversational writing as it more accurately reflects how we actually speak.

To achieve a conversational tone of voice, try:

- Using simple language
- Avoid using jargon or technical language
- Abbreviate pronouns where possible, e.g. ‘it is’ vs ‘it’s’
- Show your personality through your word choice

When done properly, conversational copywriting should appear effortless. It gains peoples’ trust, which in turn, encourages them to take action.

7. Appeal to Your Reader’s Emotions

Emotional copywriting can be really persuasive. If you know what makes your customers tick, you can tap into their psyche and encourage them to take action. Whether we’re aware of it or not, most of our buying habits are based on emotions, rather than logic. We tend to buy things because ‘it feels right’ rather than because ‘it makes sense’. Some of the most common emotional copywriting strategies include:

- **Self-improvement** – used to sell everything from beauty products, to fitness DVDs, to health food.
- **Fear of loss** – typically used to sell insurance.
- **Love and affection** – used to sell various products as ‘gifts’, e.g. jewellery.
- **Pleasure and comfort** – used to sell ‘convenience products’ like TVs and household goods, as well as food.
- **Avoidance of pain** – usually used to sell over-the-counter pharmaceuticals.
- **Prestige and status** – think cars, houses, watches, luxury items.

For a great example of emotional copywriting that raises awareness, check out this advert on the London Underground:
Probably one of my favourite copywriting examples, Transport for London’s campaign to raise awareness of staff abuse drives home a serious message in an effective way. By adopting a child’s point of view, the copy creates a fragile, innocent tone of voice that puts the issue into real perspective.

8. Use Persuasive Language

The language that you use to sell your products or services can have a big impact on whether or not people will buy from you. As consumers, we’re constantly placing ourselves at the forefront of the narrative. And with a little persuasion, perhaps even a little flattery, persuasive copywriting can help positively influence a buying decision.

It’s often said that the 5 most influential words in the English language are:

- ‘You’ – speaks directly to the customer, delivers a personal message.
- ‘Free’ – immediately grabs our interest, we’ll all happily take something for nothing.
- ‘Because’ – provides reasoning, can be logical but most effective when emotional.
- ‘New’ – one of the most powerful words in advertising, everyone wants to be the first.
• ‘Now’ – more effective nowadays than ever, why wait when you can have what you want instantly.

9. Create Urgency in Your Writing

Nothing closes a sale quicker than scarcity. By creating a tone of urgency in your copywriting, you can really help increase the success of you calls to action. For example, by explaining to your customers that your stock is limited, or that your offer is only available for the next few days, you’ll improve the chances of them buying from you there and then.

Here are a few techniques you can use to create urgency in your copy:

• Put a deadline on your offer, e.g. ‘ends today’, ‘10% off if you buy in the next hour’.
• Use time-sensitive language, e.g. ‘while stocks last’, or ‘time is running out’.
• Use a direct call to action, e.g. ‘register today’, ‘buy now’.
• Add a ‘because’, i.e. explain the consequences of not buying from you, e.g. ‘Pick up your copy of XYZ today because our offer ends tomorrow’.
• Give a guarantee, e.g. ‘buy now, return later’, ‘great results or your money back’, or the classic ‘100% money back guarantee – no questions asked’.

A note of caution though – don’t make false claims. The last thing you want is customers complaining that your three-day offer has somehow been stretched to three months.

This Fred Perry graphic from their website, offers up some straight-to-the-point copywriting that grabs your attention using simple, clear language and a direct call to action.
10. Pay Attention to Structure and Form

Good copywriting should be easy on the eye, and that means having a headline, sub-headings, paragraphs, and bullet points. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rules, but these elements help break up your copy, making them more readable.

When people read online, they tend to be put off by large blocks of text with no spaces, so when writing for the web, try using short sentences and regular paragraphs. This provides ‘eye relief’ and helps your reader engage with the content better.

If you’re writing for print however, sometimes long-form copy can be more effective. When we read in print, whether it’s a book, a magazine, or packaging, we tend to commit more time to the copy, and so longer sentences and large blocks of text often draw us in.

Consider this print advert from First Bank and how it draws us in (despite us reading it online) with its long sentence. Superfluous words and jargon aside, the copy rewards the reader with a double hit of humour if they read right to the end, making you feel like you’re in on a private joke.
Structurally, there are tried and tested methods out there that can help present your copy in the most persuasive light. So-called ‘copywriting formulas’ can help break down some of the science behind good structure and what to say when.

Some common copywriting formulas include:

Our mortgages are straightforward, to the point and without superfluous words and jargon that have no reason for being there except to confuse you and sneak something in, banana, that you might not notice.
• AIDA – Action, Interest, Desire, Action
• The 4 P’s: Product, Price, Place, Promotion
• QUEST – Qualify, Understand, Educate, Stimulate, Transition (credited to Michael Fortin)
• Problem, Agitate, Solve

For a comprehensive list of copywriting formulas, check out this post by Joanna Wiebe from Copyhackers.

11. Remove All Purchasing Risk

Without a doubt, the best guarantee you can offer is a 100% money back guarantee. By offering your product at no risk, you will gain a lot of trust from your readers and instil them with confidence that your product or service is the best on the market. Remember that you must honour your guarantee for any customer that takes you up on it.

You may want to reinforce the power of your guarantee by removing all elements of risk and closing your sales copy with something like this

“You don’t have to decide now if this product is for you. Just buy it and see how it works for you. If it doesn’t do everything you expect and more, if you don’t save money, or if your business doesn’t improve, just let us know and we’ll give you a full refund! This way, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

12. Address Your Customers’ Objections

It doesn’t take much for a customer to hesitate when making a purchasing decision. Sometimes they’ll postpone, sometimes they’ll look for alternatives and sometimes they’ll just dismiss the idea all together. By identifying the possible reasons that people might not buy from you, you can address these barriers in your copy and convince them otherwise.

Some of the most common customer buying objections include:

**Price** – your products or services can either be too high and therefore seemingly unaffordable, or too low and seen as ‘bottom of the pile’. A possible solution for being ‘too expensive’ is to break down your pricing and give it some perspective,
e.g. ‘our product costs less than a cup of coffee per week’. And if you’re too low, frame it with something like ‘too good to be true, unless it’s actually true’.

**Timing** – your prospective customer may well be in the market for whatever you’re selling but may not have the time to buy from you right now. One way of addressing this objection is by making the whole buying process as quick and simple as possible. This may mean having fewer steps in the process, or simply offering a ‘100% money back guarantee’ within a certain time frame to encourage them to commit to the purchase.

**Trust** – if you’re a new business, people might not trust you in the same way that they trust the competition who have been around for years. If this is the case, using social proof like positive customer comments, reviews, testimonials etc. can help put the minds of prospective customers at ease.

**Complacency** – ‘if it ain’t broke don’t fix it’ is a common buying objection. One way to overcome this barrier is to put the heat on to your competition, draw attention to their shortcomings and explain how you do it better.

**13. Use a Strong Call to Action.**

If you don’t ask you don’t get. Give clear, concise instructions on what you want your customers to do next. Whether you want them to sign up, buy, or share, you need to tell them – don’t assume that people will instinctively know what to do when they read your copy.

Your call to action should be short, sharp and to-the-point, and shouldn’t leave any room for misinterpretation. Some of the most powerful words you can use in your CTA, include:

**Start** – suggests the customer will be taken on a journey.

**Stop** – grabs our attention and can be used to describe common pain points, followed by a solution.

**Join** – i.e. ‘the club’. Everyone enjoys the feeling of being a part of something exclusive, and the word ‘join’ perfectly plays on our need for identity.

**Learn** – appeals to our natural curiosity for education.

**Discover** – evokes the idea of ‘freedom’ in abundance.
For a good example of a call to action, check out this one from FreshBooks:

![Free Trial Ad](https://www.freshbooks.com/)

- ‘Start’ – the idea of a journey.
- ‘Your’ – speaks directly to the reader.
- ‘Free’ – what’s not to love about free?
- ‘Trial’ – no pressure, if it doesn’t work out, hey-ho.
- ‘Today’ – as in ‘now’. Not tomorrow...now.

For more copywriting tips like these, be sure to sign up to the [Brand New Copy blog](https://www.brandnewcopy.com/)

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