



Voice and Writing for the Web

WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS

Like any commercial organization, we are competing. We are competing for the **BEST STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY**. So, we need to be clear about what makes us different from other universities and, importantly, we need to be able to communicate this.

Communications

We communicate in three ways; the way we look, the way we sound and the way we behave. As well as our visual identity, which includes our logo, colors and typography, our verbal identity is a crucial part of who we are and how we connect with people, be it colleagues, students, alumni, or business partners. It comprises our tone of voice, our stories and our names.

Consistency is everything

The more consistent we are, the more likely it is that people will understand what makes us special. The way we express ourselves has to be joined up and consistent so that people admire, respect and, crucially, trust us. We need a strong verbal identity that we all understand and know how to use.

WHAT IS OUR MESSAGE?

The UC Davis Graduate School of Management is focused on preparing the next generation of inspired, results-driven and innovative leaders who are committed to making a positive impact.

Our Goals

- **Continue our ascent** to the upper tier of U.S. business schools and **greater prominence** on the international stage.
- **Strengthen and advance our community** of faculty, students and alumni as influential, responsible and agile leaders.
- **Set the standard** as shapers of global business and management practices with game-changing knowledge, integrity and the highest degree of personal character.

Why UC Davis GSM?

- **We set the standard** for responsible business leadership.
- **We prepare** results-driven, innovative and agile learners who can adapt quickly, leading and collaborating to make a positive impact.
- **We think and act boldly**, working smarter and harder as a global leader in business and management research and education.
- **We partner** with corporations that practice and value our approach and share in our success.

OUR PERSONALITY/TONE OF VOICE

Our tone of voice is the way in which we write and speak, what we say and how we say it. Like a person, what we say is dictated by our principles, experiences and aspirations, how we say it is informed by our personality.

What's a personality?

Your personality traits inform how you express yourself, how you do things.

How does it influence what we say?

Our personality guides how we talk and write for the Graduate School of Management.

Express our Personality

If a person were straightforward, influential, empowering, and friendly, how would they sound? Use the following pages for ideas on how to bring these personality traits to life in your writing. If we are friendly, we should sound friendly. Bring some warmth to your words. Likewise, if we're straightforward and influential, our language should be too. No falling back on tired old clichés or bureaucratic jargon. **Remember, this is as much about the style of your writing as the content.**

We are...

STRAIGHTFORWARD

CREATIVE

IMAGINATIVE

CONVERSATIONAL/FRIENDLY

Describe breakthrough research and scholarship that **changes lives**. Focus on **what motivates people to chase their dreams** at UC Davis. Tell the story of innovation and discovery, but **in terms of community and human impact**.

We are...

STRAIGHTFORWARD

What we mean

Clear, uncomplicated, easy to understand and buy into, single-minded

What we don't mean

Dumbed down, patronizing, lacking in substance

How does “straightforward” sound?

Straightforward doesn't mean that we're dumbing down, oversimplifying or being patronizing. It means that we avoid over-complicated terminology and jargon that is exclusive to our sector or discipline. We make our language as easy as possible to understand. People don't have time to wade through complex and long-winded explanations and we stand a much better chance of getting our message across if we keep it simple. You'll see more tips on clarity and simplicity in the general writing tips at the end of this section.

TIPS

- **Clear.** Don't use 10 words when three will do. Don't use an over-complicated, long word if a shorter word would do just as well. What format are you writing for? Is this a website, a leaflet, a prospectus? Will it be kept and studied or will it be all too easy to press the 'next' button? Bear this in mind when you're writing.
- **Uncomplicated.** Communication sent does not necessarily equal communication received. Don't get bogged down in complex jargon-laden language and legal conditions. People don't have the time. Give yourself your best chance of being read.
- **Easy to understand and buy into.** Think about your audience. Who are you talking to? How much time have they got? What's important to them? Use these questions to focus and simplify your language. Good writing is accessible to all its audiences.
- **Single-minded.** Don't over-complicate your writing with lots of different ideas. Try to be clear about what it is you want to say and stick to it. With one single clear idea, you can be sure that your audience (with many other messages and lots of other communication noise to deal with) will get it.

We are... **CONFIDENT**

What we mean

Accomplished, authoritative, we celebrate success, we take pride in what we do.

What we don't mean

Arrogant, style over substance, over-promising, self-important.

How does “confident” sound?

We'd like to be more confident. So let's recognize and showcase our achievements - individually and as a university. Let's take pride in the great things we do and celebrate our successes. This isn't about being boastful but doing justice to the people and work here. We need to take stock and acknowledge our achievements. We need to talk with authority as well as confidence. If we are confident in ourselves, other people will be too. Speak authentically to the strengths and assets of GSM and the university at large.

TIPS

- **Accomplished.** Talk about our achievements. If we've increased our rankings, if we've done some influential research, if we've got an award-winning academic, if we've benefited the world in some way, let's talk about it.
- **Authoritative.** This doesn't mean being pompous or jargonistic. It's more about showing that we know what we're talking about. We are the authority. Get an expert testimonial or comment. Be specific about our expertise in a particular area. How many years, what papers, which awards?
- **We celebrate success.** Explain why this is relevant, why it's useful, why it's impressive, what difference it will make.
- **We take pride in what we do.** Put some emotion into it. Yes, we are proud. Yes, this is exciting. Always substantiate what we say. This isn't puff and vanity. It's about sharing our knowledge and giving people useful information about us.

We are... **CREATIVE**

What we mean

Visionary, creative, experimental, open to new ideas, at the forefront.

What we don't mean

Unrealistic, not living in the real world, flights of fancy, dreaming and not doing

How does “creative” sound?

Yes, we've got our feet on the ground. What we do makes a difference to people all over the world. But this requires us to be creative. We're people with vision, with the foresight to see and believe in new ideas. And more importantly, we'll act on our vision.

TIPS

- **Visionary.** Remember who you're talking to. What's exciting and visionary for one audience may not be for another. Find an imaginative headline or opening sentence to attract and hook your reader.
- **Creative.** Does it have to be a letter, an A4 prospectus or a newsletter?
- **Be imaginative.** What will excite and seduce your readers? Think of specific instances where we are or have been imaginative. Again, think big or small.
- **Experimental.** When have we been experimental and how? Why did it work? And what were the results? How can you show this flair in your language?
- **Open to new ideas.** Remember this is as much about how you say it as what you say so think about the style of your language. When and how have we been open to new ideas?
- **At the forefront.** We are making a difference in the world in innovative ways.

We are...

CONVERSATIONAL and FRIENDLY

What we mean

Approachable, digestible, active voice

What we don't mean

Authoritative, stuffy, institutional, passive, unprofessional

How does “conversational and friendly” sound?

We are not talking to people, but rather with people.

Conversational sounds personal – think “you” vs. “student”. Use first and second person. Write as if you are talking to a friend or acquaintance to avoid sounding stuffy or institutional.

TIPS

- **Approachable.** Make your reader feel comfortable. Provide contact information when needed. Be organized and easy to understand.
- **Digestible.** When writing about complex research and related topics, find ways to explain the work with analogies, examples, illustrations, photos and graphs.
- **Active Voice.** Readers prefer active voice sentences. Active voice makes text stronger by showing responsibility or giving credit for an action. Active voice more closely resembles spoken language.
- **Be friendly.** Make the reader happy. Provide useful information. Be approachable (see above). Provide added value.

GENERAL WRITING TIPS

1. **Think about what you are trying to say.** Take a few moments first. What are you trying to say? Jot down the main points. Don't worry about structuring them. Let the ideas flow; you can organize them later.
2. **Remember who you are talking to.** What's important to them? What would excite or help them? How much time do they have? How old are they? The more detailed the picture, the easier it will be to write for them. Think of someone you know who is in this target audience. Imagine them sitting right in front of you. Read it out. Would you talk to this person like this?
3. **Create a clear structure.** Divide your work into manageable paragraphs of no more than eight sentences and sentences of no more than 20-25 words with a single idea in each. This helps create a clear narrative that people can easily navigate. It helps you get your message across too.
4. **Use headings.** Headlines for chapters, pages, sub-sections and paragraphs create a narrative. These act as signposts for busy readers and ensure they get, even at the quickest glance, some of the messages you want them to.
5. **Just start Now.** you have the bones of a structure. Start writing. Write to your structure, but let the ideas flow. Don't worry about getting it right first time. You can edit later.
6. **Edit, edit, edit Always edit.** Editing is as important as writing itself. The art of great editing is knowing when to stop. Strive for concision, but don't cut it back so far that the language has no personality. Be brutal. Your writing will be better for it.
7. **Avoid the passive.** Why? The passive sounds weaker, is less direct, more formal and impersonal. Have a look at this simple example: Your letter will be replied to in due course. We'll reply as soon as we can.
8. **Get straight to the point.** No-one has time to navigate reams of copy to find out what you're trying to say. Get to the point quickly and make it interesting. Be clear about what you want to say and stick to it. People read differently online than they do when they read print materials -- web users typically scan for information.
9. **We / you.** Give your writing a more personal, human touch. Instead of saying 'The University has an active relationship with students', say 'You can get involved'. The emphasis here is on 'we' and 'you' rather than 'we, we, we'. Remember it's about what our readers want to know and not just what we want to tell them.
10. **Use every day English.** Use simple words. Language is to express and communicate, not impress.

TOP TEN TIPS FOR WRITING FOR THE WEB

1. **Digital content** is not the same as print content. People encounter and read it differently – they scan it, so you need to write it differently. Divide it into smaller chunks with subheadings.
2. **Language** is most powerful when used economically, and that's doubly true online. Write in tabloid-size packages using a maximum of 25 words per sentence, one sentence per paragraph, four to six words per headline.
3. **Legibility.** It's hard to read off a screen. It's 25% slower than print. Help your reader. Don't go crazy with bolding, italicizing and capitals. Never use underlining to highlight because it will make your text look hyperlinked and confuse your reader.
4. **Credibility.** There can be no excuses for poor spelling and grammar. It seriously undermines the credibility of your message. Sloppy spelling will not make you look serious or professional. It could even make your communications appear fraudulent. Make the dictionary your best friend.
5. **Ambiguity isn't good.** Your writing should do what it says on the tin.
6. **Searchability.** Write to be found. What words would people type into Google to find you? Use those words in your copy. But don't overuse the same phrase to the detriment of your writing or marketing.
7. **Accessibility.** Don't exclude visually impaired or blind readers. Don't let your copy rely heavily on imagery, and use tags and captions as opportunities to fully describe pictures. Remember to describe hyperlinks fully.
8. **Personality.** Just because you're writing for digital media doesn't mean that you have to lose your brand's personality. There is always a way to infuse even the most restrained copy with personality.
9. **Spam.** Don't unintentionally make emails to customers look like spam. This is especially important in subject lines. Avoid words like 'free', 'win'. Avoid spelling mistakes, text speak abbreviations and acronyms as these are all on the spam filter hit list. Think hard about the words you use and how they'll look sitting in someone's inbox...
10. **Structure.** When structuring your work, think of an inverted pyramid. The most important information first, the broader base of detail later.

SAMPLE BLOG TEMPLATE

Topic

What will you be writing about?

Title

Emotional eye-catching title about the topic

Heading

3-5 sentences about topics covered in blog. This should be written in a manner that is light, informative, and intriguing.

Intro about Topic

The first paragraph should be a light introduction to what you are talking about. Explain why this topic is important and relevant to your audience.

Body Paragraphs

This is where you put the bulk and meat of your posts. Outline your main points and decide how you want to present the information,

Final Paragraph

Conclude with a section about what the take-away message is. What do you want readers to do after they read the post? Think about that and then decide what you want to write about for the last section.

Extra Resources

If relevant, include a few extra sources (preferably GSM content)

CREATE EMOTIONAL HEADLINES

Positive/Happy Emotions Do a Better Job Encouraging Shares

Research shows that not only do emotions cause us to share, but positive emotions seem to add an additional boost. Popular headlines don't only trigger our emotions, but they help us imagine a positive outcome, they help us imagine a better life.

180+ Power Words for Writing Emotional Headlines (source: [CoSchedule](#))

sale	useful	approved	revisited	security	compromise
new	survival	competitive	unique	refundable	odd
professional	largest	full	bargain	quickly	bottom line
guaranteed	colossal	mammoth	hurry	revolutionary	zinger
special	now	innovative	daring	miracle	simplified
tested	unlock	it's here	pioneering	magic	tremendous
improved	fortune	just arrived	destiny	proven	helpful
immediately	authentic	sure fire	unsurpassed	reward	special offer
limited	announcing	soar	genuine	weird	technology
simplistic	huge gift	beautiful	informative	surprise	selected
powerful	introducing	crammed	mainstream	delighted	sturdy
popular	practical	growth	complete	confidential	wealth
exclusive	focus	promising	last chance	sizable	successful
valuable	wanted	astonishing	exploit	wonderful	opportunities
how to	absolutely lowest	imagination	quality	delivered	last minute
endorsed	interesting	greatest	gigantic	secrets	monumental
unlimited	challenge	high tech	love	scarce	startling
discount	lifetime	latest	lavishly	alert famous	quick
fundamentals	highest	important	reliable	strong	easy
under priced	expert	urgent	terrific	unusual	direct
suddenly	advice	amazing	breakthrough	outstanding	simple
perspective	the truth about	exciting	emerging	energy	strange
launching	compare	portfolio	profitable	instructive	value
skill	colorful	revealing	sampler	liberal	insider
reduced	affordable	sensational	noted	rare	download
better	ultimate	excellent	luxury	edge	
shrewd	willpower	remarkable	unconditional	superior	
enormous	attractive	obsession	timely	unparalleled	
spotlight	easily	surging	bonanza	fascinating	

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TIPS & TRICKS

We encourage you to support each other's social media efforts and to collaborate whenever possible to show solidarity among UC Davis schools, divisions, departments and programs, and share content when it is appropriate across your social media platforms.

GSM Social Media Accounts

Facebook - GSM Main	http://www.facebook.com/ucdavismba
Facebook - Wine Executive Program	http://www.facebook.com/pages/Davis-CA/UC-Davis-Wine-Executive-Program/51353553661
Twitter - GSM Main	http://twitter.com/ucdavismba
Twitter - WEP	https://twitter.com/Ucdaviswine
Twitter - Exec Education	https://twitter.com/ucdavisexeced
Twitter- MSBA	https://twitter.com/ucdavisbigdata
LinkedIn Group	http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=2282
LinkedIn Company Page	https://www.linkedin.com/company/uc-davis-graduate-school-of-management?trk=company_logo
YouTube Channel	http://www.youtube.com/user/UCDavisGSM
MBA Ambassador Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/ucdavismba/
MPAc Ambassador Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/ucdavimpac/

Common Hashtags

#UCDavis	#TriviaTuesday	#MBAstudent
#Aggies	#TBT	#ThoughtLeadership
#AggiePride	#ThoughtfulThursday	#CareerCred
#AggiePrideFriday	#FunFactFriday	#Influence
#GoAggies	#SocialSaturday	#fasttrack
#GoAgs	#SoulfulSunday	#networks
#YourSchoolYourView	#MBA	#newbiz
#Motivational Monday	#MBALife	#HigherEd
#MindfulMonday	#MBAFriends	
#GratiTuesday	#MBAAwesome	

Tip: Use Hashtagify to find related hashtags: <http://hashtagify.me/>

UC DAVIS OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS AND WEBSITES

Social media: It's where the UC Davis community comes together online to share ideas and express our collective creativity.

Facebook

Get to know us. We've got videos, news, photos and lots of connections to each other. Better yet, communicate yourself.

Official UC Davis Mobile app

Made by students for students, the official UC Davis Mobile allows iOS and Android users to do everything from checking real-time Unitrans schedules to accessing your UC Davis email.

YouTube

View UC Davis accomplishments and Aggie pride through the world of video.

Google +

Connect with us for the latest news, photos and videos about our campus, we'll even throw in the occasional Google +Hangout.

Pinterest

UC Davis invites you to share our photos, videos and stories about what makes this campus special.

Twitter

From admissions and athletics to teaching and research news, UC Davis is continuing the dialogue with our community in "tweets."

LinkedIn

Connect to the professional world, including UC Davis alumni, faculty, staff and students.

- [UC Davis \(company\)](#)
- [University of California, Davis Network \(group\)](#)

Blogs

Read and comment on our University Communication blogs written about research and photography, as well as occasional blogs written by campus members on special news and events.

iTunes U

You can find UC Davis news, lectures, interviews, athletics and more. The UC Davis campus community is especially invited to publish audio and video content on the site.

Guidelines

Students, staff, faculty members and the greater community are encouraged to use social media following these [guidelines and best practices](#).

USEFUL UC DAVIS CAMPUS RESOURCES

UC Davis Photo & Video Library

<http://photos.ucdavis.edu/>

Hint: Be sure to login using your UC Davis login at the top right of the screen for full-access to images.

UC Davis Marketing Toolbox

<http://marketingtoolbox.ucdavis.edu/>

UC Davis Strategic Communications

<http://strategiccommunications.ucdavis.edu/resources/index.html>

UC Davis Box

Cloud-hosted data storage and collaboration service and tool.

<https://ucdavis.app.box.com/login>

Stock Photos FOR FREE!

<https://unsplash.com/>

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