

How to win more business from your written words — checklist



PROOF COMMUNICATIONS

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The basics

I stepped away from the copy for 24 hours.

Have a break before editing and refining your first draft. Your fresh brain and eyes will have far greater impact on polishing the copy.

I deleted 30% of original draft.

Be ruthless editing your first draft. This will make your copy tight and free of unnecessary details.

I have implemented the 80/20 rule.

Ensure your writing strikes the right balance with no more than 20% written in first person (I, we, us), leaving the remaining 80% focused on the customer (you, your).

I have cross checked all my facts.

It's far better to be accurate than risk needing to print a retraction.

I have broken long sentences into shorter ones.

Short sentences are easier to read.

I have a strong intro that leads into greater details and a summary.

Test you have tight copy by reading it the same way a TV newsreader presents the news.

My copy is simple.

A clear and concise message is more likely to be read, understood and shared.

There is no jargon or complex words.

Your reader doesn't want to feel stupid or waste time looking up language.

I don't have too many adjectives.

You know how you don't believe a lot of advertising? Descriptions rarely mean much, nor do they add value to your content.

I have used bullet points:

- *They're a great way to get your main ideas across quickly.*
 - *They make your points clearly.*
 - *They're easy on the eye and to read.*
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I have used exclamation marks sparingly and only as necessary.

They make your business look cheap!!!!!!

My contact details are clearly displayed on every page.

Don't lose a potential customer by forgetting to tell them how to get in touch.

I have read the document out loud.

It's what proofreaders do to find those hidden mistakes.

Ask someone else to proofread before you publish.

Because the fastest way to give a poor impression is sloppy grammar, poor punctuation and typos.

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For extra polish

I have sub-headings throughout the copy.

Breaking up content not only keeps your reader interested, it makes the copy easier to read.

I have de-cluttered my copy and removed unnecessary words.

Words such as “really”, “that” and “very” are rarely needed so delete them.

I have not used words like “hope” and “try”.

Have a strong, confident message by using “will” and “can”.

I have reduced formality by using contractions, when appropriate.

“You’ll”, “it’s” and “we’ll” make your content more personal.

I have used “who” instead of “that”.

Another tip to personalise your copy.

I have turned features into benefits.

Use the linking phrase “which means”, e.g. “Folds flat, which means it’s easy to stack and store.”

Now for extra sparkle

I have outlined my readers’ problem and how I/we solve it.

The only thing that matters to your customer is how you can help and what that means to them.

I have done the “so what” test.

Assess how well your copy focuses on why anyone should buy what you’re selling. Do so by asking “So what?” after every statement.

My copy begins with the strongest selling points.

Hook your reader by starting with how you’re helping so they want to read more.

I have a killer headline to catch my readers’ attention.

If stuck, focus on a “How to...” or... “Did you know...” headline. These have been successfully getting readers’ attention for more than 50 years.

I have given readers a compelling reason why they should believe what I’ve written.

*Use the word “because”, e.g. “This widget is the best **because** it will clean your engine four times faster than standard widgets.”*

I have been specific with information.

Saying 157 businesses use your services is more powerful than saying hundreds do.

I have included a solid promise.

Win more business by saying: “Get your car professionally valeted in under an hour or receive a 20% discount” rather than “We’re the fastest valet service in town!”

I have included a clear call to action.

Let you reader know what you want them to do next, e.g. “Call now to order your copy.”
