

Dell Digital Design

# VOICE AND TONE GUIDELINES

Our team's t-shirt says:



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**Dell Digital Design**

## **Audience**

Our audience includes everyone who uses an online channel to interact with Dell. Regardless of the users' task – browsing, research, comparison, purchase, or support – or abilities, Dell Digital Design enables users to complete their purpose of visit.

## **We Stand For**

Creating satisfied customers who will promote and return to Dell by enabling them to achieve their purpose of visit by delivering the right information at the right time and in the right context.

## **We Believe**

Technology can transform people's lives in profound ways. Our role is to connect all users to the Dell products that will most productively empower them to unlock their greatest potential.

## **We Promise**

To craft accessible, inclusive experiences and journeys that give users the information they want and need to make good decisions and feel confident about the decisions they make.

### **Integrity**

- We demonstrate authenticity and in everything we say and do.
- Users can trust our descriptions of Dell's industry-leading innovation to find the right technology solution.
- Our communications with users are transparent and genuine in guiding them to the optimal solution.
- We hold ourselves accountable to an exceptional standard of excellence and performance.

### **Partnership**

- Our relationships with our customers are the foundation of Dell's success.
- Our relationships with our product and marketing colleagues are the foundation of Dell Digital Design's success.
- We perform better and deliver better results when we work together and include everyone.
- Our relationship with users does not end after they check out. Purchase is the first stage of earning referrals and repeat business.

### **Responsiveness**

- We design experiences that make Dell approachable by all people, regardless of their knowledge of or experience with technology, and organizations of every size.
- We use research, analytics, and machine learning to anticipate what all users want and need.
- We are confident that we can match users with particular needs to the optimal technology solution for their unique circumstances.

# Dell Digital Design Voice + Tone

# Voice and Tone

“Voice” is Dell’s brand and its personality. It is consistent. Any changes are significant, developed and considered over time, and communicated from the organization’s senior leaders.

“Tone” changes based on the situation. A common example to distinguish voice from tone is how a parent speaks to a child. The parent’s voice always is loving, supportive, and nurturing. The parent’s tone will vary depending on whether the parent is praising a good deed, warning of impending danger, or counseling about an important life decision.

In the case of Dell, our voice emerges from our mission to create technologies that drive human progress and deliver those technologies to people everywhere, regardless of their abilities, and to organizations of all sizes, so everyone can thrive in the digital economy.

Our tone will vary depending on whether we’re:

- Describing the benefits of an Inspiron 3000 17-inch laptop to a busy parent.
- Detailing the tech specs of a Precision 5540 mobile workstation to a geologist working in the field.
- Helping a road warrior choose between a Latitude 7000 and an XPS 13 2-in-1.
- Fulfilling the dreams of competitive gamers buying their first Alienware Aurora.
- Enabling an IT administrator to find the PowerEdge rack server that best balances power, performance, and price.

This document offers guidance about crafting experiences using Dell Digital Design's voice and tone. Like other industry leaders such as [Mailchimp](#), [Slack](#), and [IKEA](#), we use our voice and tone guidelines to:

- Demonstrate that we live our brand's values.
- Make sure our experiences are consistent.
- Deliver consistently human-centered and useful information to users who rely on Dell to meet their technology needs.



## A trusted advisor

*Dell should be a trusted advisor for people making important decisions about meeting their technology needs.*

For many of our customers, the computer they choose will be the most expensive purchase they make that is not a car or home.

Develop human-centered experiences and journeys as if you're an expert anyone would feel comfortable approaching for advice.

A useful metaphor is to think about a social gathering – a back-yard barbeque or cocktail party – at which someone with whom you have a distant but meaningful relationship – your boss's children, for example – asks your advice on a topic about which you're an expert.

# The bicycle metaphor

For purposes of this metaphor, assume your expertise is in bicycling.

- Your boss's children know that they soon will have to make a significant bicycle-purchase decision.
- They know too little about bicycles to trust their own knowledge and judgment to make the best decision.
- They don't have time to attain your level of expertise or earn your experience.
- And, once they've made their decisions, they won't have to make another bicycle purchase decision for several years – at which point, everything you know now will have changed so significantly that retaining the knowledge and advice you'll share is pointless.

Bicycling is something almost everyone can do. Accommodations are available for people whose physical challenges make riding a traditional bike impractical. Bicycling can be purely recreational, purely work, or anywhere along the spectrum between the two. Bicycles come in a range of prices, from very affordable to outrageously expensive. There's a robust market of used and refurbished bikes for people who want more performance than they can afford in a new bike. People can use bikes safely or dangerously, depending on their level of knowledge about bicycling conventions or risk tolerance. And someone using a bike dangerously also puts other people at risk.

Craft experiences and journeys for the Dell Digital Design audience in the voice and tone you'd use at a social gathering to advise your boss's children about choosing the best bicycles to meet their unique needs.

You'll put aside distractions and other conversations. You'll probably remove yourselves from the distractions of the main event, even though the main event is still going on. Someone might interrupt your conversation, but you'll be so focused on the subject that you can pick up where you left off. If your boss's children show a cavalier attitude about their ignorance, you'll maintain your voice (because you are who you are) but you'll adopt a different tone – more parental, less peer-oriented.

You'll establish some baseline about your boss's children's knowledge. If they already know the basics, from research or experience, you can skip to the details of the purchase decision:

- What level of performance they'll need based on how they plan to use the bike.
- What options are available at different price points.

But if they're novices, they'll count on you to advise them about their assumptions and what they don't know but need to know.

You'll be offering advice and information that to you seems really basic – maybe even boring.

The ability to successfully convey all that stuff you know is the difference between competence – that is, knowing a subject well enough to do your job – and mastery – that is, knowing a subject well enough to teach others to know it well enough to do your job.

At Dell, we've mastered connecting people with the innovative technology they need to open doors to new worlds of opportunity.

## Competence and mastery

We communicate with our users from that position of mastery.

Mastery is not superiority. Instead, it's a genuine partnership between users who want to learn about their choices and an advisor who knows everything they want to learn. The advisor must communicate useful, actionable information transparently to develop an authentic relationship.

Through consistent application of that authenticity, users come to know they can trust the information Dell Digital Design provides because we've developed a genuine relationship. Users will let Dell guide them through their decision-making process to a choice that is right for each user's unique circumstances.

# Principles

We communicate in a voice that exemplifies these principles:

## **We use human-centered language that is concise, clear, and straightforward.**

We use it to describe meaningful, real-world uses of Dell's technology and the benefits users will enjoy when they use Dell products.

- We do not apply flowery praise that we haven't earned to Dell or our products.
- We do not use clichés, because users get bored when they see and hear the same old marketing fluff they expect to see and hear about every product in our highly competitive market.
- We do not use technology-industry jargon or acronyms we haven't explained.

Because we partner with our product-owner and marketing colleagues, we are confident in our mastery of the subject and Dell's products. Our clear, straightforward conversation about technology demonstrates our respect for users across abilities, languages, and cultures.

## **We assure our products and services are accessible to everyone.**

We craft experiences, journeys, and content that are fully accessible because doing so improves those experiences for everyone, including users who live with physical or cognitive challenges and limited language proficiency.

- We do not display blocks of text without headers, hierarchy, or other contextual clues that let users understand the value and relative importance of the information.
- We do not hotlink text unless the text describes the content to which the link takes the user.
- We do not rely on entirely visual cues such as bold-faced fonts or text color to emphasize the importance of information.
- We do not describe the location of content or give instructions using directional language (above, below, left, right) that is confusing or meaningless to users who rely on screen readers or devices that might alter the experience's visual presentation.
- We do not show images that are not meaningfully described in alt-text accessible to screen readers.

Accessibility is the foundation of our design principles. In addition to exemplifying the right approach to design, it makes easier the translation of content into the many languages we support across our regions. We meet or exceed the company's accessibility standards, including readability, in everything we do.

Accessible, inclusive design improves experiences for all users.

## **We design inclusive experiences.**

We use language and design that educates, empowers, supports, and inspires. Our design principles are consciously liberated from voice, tone, and terminology that could reflect stereotypical or prejudiced perspectives about individuals or groups. Because our design approach celebrates what we share in common, we refer to personal characteristics only when they are relevant to the context of the experience.

- We do not make assumptions about individuals or groups based on their appearances, perceived intellectual capabilities, abilities, class or caste, personalities, genders, sexual orientations or preferences, races, ethnicities, ages, or geographies.
- We do not use language or design that intentionally or unintentionally excludes anyone from any group, and we do not use gendered language (for example, actress, salesman) unless there is no other way to design the experience.
- We do not risk making false assumptions about people based on our perspective of “normal” or their identifications with groups or cultures (for example, the color red has significantly different meanings across multiple cultures, and the symbol now commonly recognized as a swastika has cultural meanings in the Hindu faith and among some indigenous peoples of the Americas).

Because we empower users through their strengths and abilities (rather than “fix” users’ perceived weaknesses or deficiencies), our commitment to inclusive and accessible experiences promotes respectful relationships in our diverse global society. Inclusive experiences ensure all users can see themselves using our products and feel they are reflected in the experiences we craft.

## **We assure our products and services are accessible to everyone.**

We craft experiences, journeys, and content that are fully accessible because doing so improves those experiences for everyone, including users who live with physical or cognitive challenges and limited language proficiency.

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## **We are practical and optimistic.**

We communicate in ways that demonstrate we understand our users. We understand the challenges they face in their unique circumstances. And we understand that Dell technology can meet and overcome their particular challenges.

- We do not expect users to figure out how our technology meets their needs.
- We do not deliver information unless we do so in a context that proves we know how people want to use that information.
- We do not lead with problems – we lead with solutions.

Our conversation with users helps both us and our users understand how they can use our technology to solve problems or take advantage of opportunities.

## **We speak naturally.**

Our voice is conversational, engaging, and highly readable as measured by industry standards. We are confident in our ability to help users find technology solutions that meet their needs. Because we are confident, we are comfortable. And because we are comfortable, we want to make others comfortable, regardless of their confidence in their knowledge.

- We do not use a big word when a small word achieves the same goal.
- We do not use formal, stiff academic or corporate language that qualifies claims or puts distance between experts and people who don't possess an expert's specialized knowledge.
- We do not design experiences that exclude people based on their identifications, abilities, or our perceptions of their membership in a group.
- We do not craft experiences that are inaccessible to people who have not gone to college or have limited proficiency in the language in which the user engages our digital channels.

Because we're confident and comfortable and want our users to feel the same way, we can apply clever, light-hearted humor when appropriate. Humor – not sarcasm – can help establish deeper and more personal connections with users because humor emerges from shared experiences.

**We supplement use cases with real-world examples, data, and facts whenever we can.**

Stories connect us to our users. Data and facts – not tech specs – let users create their own stories about Dell and its products.

- We do not present solutions to problems that users won't encounter in real life.
- We do not use hyperbole, puffery, or marketing fluff to describe our products.
- We do not lead with speeds and feeds – we lead with benefits and human-centered use cases.

The most valuable relationship we can develop with our users is based on users coming to their own conclusions about Dell and our technology solutions.

## **We align our content with Dell's brand:**

- We put our customers and their priorities first.  
*We do not* prioritize selling users something for the sake of moving products out of inventory.
- We describe the benefits of what Dell technology makes possible.  
*We do not talk* in speeds and feeds, expecting our users to translate numbers and acronyms into actionable knowledge.
- We understand that Dell and our users are partners in shared success, both now and in the future.  
*We do not act or speak* as if users who purchase Dell products are of interest to Dell only when they are in the market for a technology solution.
- We adjust our tone to meet our audiences where they are.  
*We do not communicate* with users as if they are undifferentiated in their knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.
- We focus on the holistic experience of our users on their journey.  
*We do not design* experiences that guide users down paths that aren't productive for them or that move them farther from their purpose of visit.
- We lead with facts and data that are current and legally supported.  
*We do not rely* on past glory or on puffery to persuade users to make decisions.
- We are truthful and honest in our approach.  
*We do not need* to compromise our integrity because we make great products that meet users' needs.

# Readability for Accessibility and Inclusion

Readability of content can be evaluated using a formula that assesses the relative simplicity or complexity of text.

- There are several formulae that have different applications in different markets or industries.
- All these formulae calculate readability based on such variables as length of words (sometimes measured in syllables instead of characters), length of sentences, length of paragraphs, syntax, and punctuation.

Generally, the formulae return a number that equates to a grade level of education. This indicates the years of school that a typical reader must have completed before being able to understand the content.

- This is the source of the clichés that news magazines are written to a sixth-grade reading level, or newspapers are written for third-grade readers.
- An exception is the Flesch Reading Ease score, which is a conceptual inversion of the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level. Flesch Reading Ease is scored on a scale of 1 to 100, with higher numbers correlated with text that is easier to read.

The Generative Content team currently is testing various hypotheses about the impact of formulae-derived readability on the user experience.

- Among leaders in the UX design community, there is a general rule of thumb that “easier is better” when it comes to text. We hypothesize this is true only to the extent that the content experience is not too simplistic.
- [Current W3C standards for readability](#) define the best practice for website text to be comfortably understandable for users with at least six years of formal education and the 2-3 years beyond that.
  - In the US, this would equate to a Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of roughly 6-9, and a Flesch Reading Ease score of between 60 and 90.
- Research conducted on consumer content experiences for Dell has identified the lower bound of a positive user experience that roughly corresponds with W3C’s [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#).
  - Specifically, test subjects began reporting negative user experiences with text written at the 5th-grade level. Test subjects reported that content was laughably simplistic and were offended at being “talked down to.”
  - Future research will test hypotheses about the upper bound of positive consumer user experiences and hypotheses that different types of users (for example, commercial/enterprise or premium consumer) identify different bounds of readability as optimal for their experiences.
  - Future research also will explore whether formulae other than Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level and Flesch Reading Ease more effectively identify optimal readability experiences for users of Dell’s digital channels.

- The Generative Content team also is in the midst of its engagement with the Acrolinx team. Acrolinx uses automated tools to assess text content on multiple spectra, including readability. Generative Content is in the process of tuning the Acrolinx tool for consumer digital experiences.
  - That will be the foundation of a dashboard, or scorecard, that will allow Dell Digital Design to focus its attention of website pages or journeys that fall outside the bounds of an optimal user experience.

# Operational examples

## Operational Examples: OC short descriptions

### Example 1

Great for households that take lots of pictures and videos on multiple devices and want to keep all of them in one simple place. A big hard drive with a fast connection gives you instant access to your most precious memories. Get a great deal on this machine built for value-conscious buyers who need a solid PC to meet their everyday computing needs.

Great for homes with photos and videos on many devices. Want it all in one place? A big hard drive means fast access to your precious memories. Get a great deal on a PC built for families who need a solution that meets their everyday computing needs.

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	9.5
Gunning Fog Index	13.5
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	64.9

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	5.6
Gunning Fog Index	10.7
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	76.1

### Comparison

Great for ~~households~~ homes that take ~~with~~ lots of pictures ~~photos~~ and ~~and~~ videos on ~~multiple~~ many devices ~~and w~~ . Want to keep all of them ~~it~~ all in one ~~simple~~ place. ~~?~~ A big hard drive ~~with a fast connection~~ gives you ~~means~~ instant ~~fast~~ access to your ~~most~~ precious memories. Get a great deal on ~~this machine~~ a PC built for ~~value-conscious buyers~~ families who need a ~~solid PC~~ to solution that meets their everyday computing needs. ~~Choose this PC today and you can.~~



## Example 2

We designed this PC to meet the everyday uses of people who need a reliable computer at home or school. From the moment you unbox it, you'll enjoy the ease of set-up and the simplicity of getting up and running with a PC you'll rely on for years to come. Get bang for your buck with this completely capable PC's low price.

We designed this PC for anyone who needs a simple, reliable computer for home or work. From unboxing to log-in, you'll be up and running fast with a PC you'll rely on for years. Get bang for your buck with this completely capable PC's low price.

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	8.9
Gunning Fog Index	12.2
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	68.7

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	6.3
Gunning Fog Index	10.5
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	77.5

## Comparison

We designed this PC ~~to meet the everyday uses of people~~ anyone who needs a simple, reliable computer ~~at home or school~~ for home or work. From ~~the moment you unbox it~~ing to log-in, you'll ~~enjoy the ease of set-up and the simplicity of get~~eting up and running fast with a PC you'll rely on for years ~~to come~~. Get bang for your buck with this completely capable PC's low price.

### Example 3

If you're a high-productivity multitasker managing lots of apps, windows, and tabs, this PC is the one for you. Massive available memory means no waiting for your computer to respond. Balance performance and price with a PC designed to give you the power to go above and beyond the needs of typical user.

If you're a high-productivity multitasker running lots of apps, windows, and tabs, this PC is for you. Massive available memory means no waiting for your computer. Balance performance, price, and the power to go above and beyond average user needs.

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	9.8
Gunning Fog Index	13.1

Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	57.0

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	9.3
Gunning Fog Index	12.3

Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	52.7

### Comparison

If you're a high-productivity multitasker ~~managing~~ running lots of apps, windows, and tabs, this PC is ~~the one~~ for you. Massive available memory means no waiting for your computer ~~to respond~~. Balance performance ~~and~~, price ~~with, and a PC designed to give you~~ the power to go above and beyond ~~the needs of typical~~ average user needs.

## Example 4

The best-in-class size of this laptop's screen gives you all the functionality of a desktop plus the flexibility of moving it easily from kitchen to office to bedroom. This big screen gives you lots of high-resolution real estate to multitask or enjoy your favorite movies. Industry-leading across-the-board performance engineered for your most demanding tasks.

This laptop gives you all the screen size of a desktop plus the flexibility to move it around the house. With a big, high-resolution screen to multitask or enjoy your favorite movie, we built industry-leading performance into every aspect of this PC.

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	11.3
Gunning Fog Index	14.0
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	49.8

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	11.2
Gunning Fog Index	14.3
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	53.8

## Comparison

~~The best-in-class size of this PC's laptop screen gives you all the functionality-screen size of a desktop plus the flexibility of moving to move it easily from kitchen to office to bedroom around the house. This big screen gives you With lots of a big, high-resolution real-estatescreen to multitask or enjoy your favorite movies. →, we built industry-leading across-the-board performance into every aspect of this PC-engineered for your most demanding tasks.~~

## Example 5

The seasoned road warrior or busy student’s go-to device for keeping work, homework, and entertainment at your fingertips. Easy to grab and go, this PC’s light weight means no downtime during your busy day. A sleek design and slender profile created to deliver terrific performance and long battery life in one of the world’s most portable PCs.

The road warrior or student’s go-to device for keeping work and play at your fingertips. Grab and go – this light PC means no downtime. Get sleek, slender design with terrific performance and long battery life in one of the world’s most portable PCs.

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level	9.9
Gunning Fog Index	13.9
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	58.9

Readability Grade Levels	
Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level	6.8
Gunning Fog Index	11.3
Readability Scores	
Flesch Reading Ease	72.7

## Comparison

The ~~seasoned~~ road warrior or ~~busy~~ student’s go-to device for keeping work, ~~homework,~~ and ~~entertainment play~~ at your fingertips. ~~Easy to G~~ grab and go, ~~–~~ this ~~light~~ PC’s ~~light weight~~ means no downtime ~~during your busy day~~. ~~A Get~~ sleek, ~~slender~~ design ~~and slender profile created to deliver with~~ terrific performance and long battery life in one of the world’s most portable PCs.

## Additional considerations

Readability statistics are not a perfect science. They must be taken with a grain of salt.

- It can be very difficult to achieve high readability in content about complex issues. For example, health care naturally uses long, complex words such as medication, therapeutic, and oncology.
- It's nearly impossible to achieve sixth-grade or lower readability statistics if the subject of your content includes lots of three- and four-syllable words. Because you can't naturally achieve highly readable content under those conditions, focus on counterbalancing the complexity of your text with strategies and tactics detailed later in this section.
- Also, different tools for measuring readability can return slightly different results for the same content. This is based on the way different programs parse text. It demonstrates the importance of consistently using the same tool over time to produce actionable results.
  - Two such tools currently in use at Dell are Microsoft Word and Acrolinx.
  - There are dozens of online tools to measure readability, and those tools typically allow a few free assessments before asking users to subscribe.
  - This is a reliable online tool that returns results for multiple readability formulae and offers a single score based on all those results: [readable.com](https://readable.com)
- Generally, any such programming-based differences in metrics will tend to disappear in large bodies of text (more than, say, a few hundred words). However, in short bodies of text (say, 50 words or fewer), the differences could be noticeable.

- A real-world example of this difference occurs in Microsoft Word. Word frequently returns one word count for a body of text when using the “Word Count” function, and another word count for the same body of text when using the readability function.

Regardless of the inevitable variations in readability metrics due to variations in programming or tools, readability scores that indicate a high likelihood of difficulties in comprehension can be a signal to compensate for complexity with, for example,

- shorter words with the same meaning,\*
- simpler sentences,
- different or more explanatory content (metaphors, charts, instructional or background videos, links to definitions, mouse-over pop-ups, “in other words...”),
- more punctuation,
- bullet lists,
- larger text,
- more white space, and
- other tactics that can make content less visually intimidating, more approachable, and more easily understood.

Although readability statistics are not a perfect science, they offer useful guardrails and highlight opportunities to improve communication with users:

- Such data is most useful in measuring change (specifically, whether changes to content “improve” readability or site-wide readability increases over time).
- Readability metrics can be combined with other analytic tools to discover targets. For example, Dell could use A/B testing to analyze whether content written at a sixth-grade level is better at driving conversions than content written at a ninth-grade level.
- Such research might find that readability has unique implications for different parts of the business. Example hypotheses might be that fifth-grade content improves sales of Inspiron products but not XPS products, or tenth-grade content improves sales of enterprise products but not consumer products.

Additional evaluation of readability might consider relatively more subjective matters such as:

- Fonts
- Size of text
- Spacing of text
- Use of bullets
- Use of white space

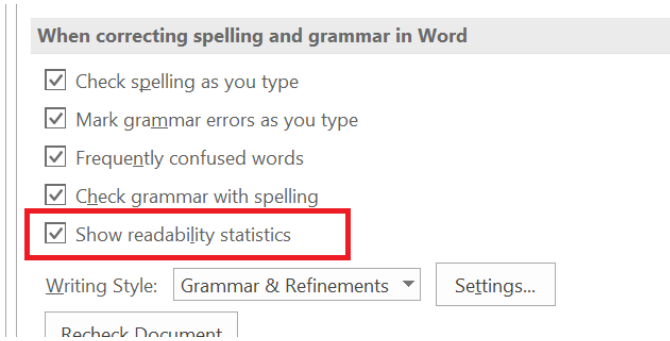
Other readability tests measure objective assessments such as

- Eye movement
- Perception
- Retention
- Actionability

Different markets and industries might choose a formula that is relevant to that market or industry's priorities.

- For example, the British Medical Association prefers the SMOG formula to evaluate the readability of health-related content.
- In the USA, the standard readability measurement is the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (lower = more readable) and, secondarily, Flesch Reading Ease (higher on a scale of 100 = more readable). These are the formulae applied by the federal government to assess readability of content produced for public-sector documents such as military training manuals, tax forms, and applications for benefits such as Medicaid and Social Security.
- Many contracts with government agencies specify readability limits for content the vendor produces.

- Microsoft Word has a function that measures both Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level and Flesch Reading Ease. Users can toggle on that measurement in the Proofing Options by selecting the check-box next to Show readability statistics:



Learn more about readability: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Readability>

*\* The primary issue to consider when making word choices is the cognitive load you're putting on the user.*

For example, choosing "medicine" instead of "medication" improves readability. Because the words are functionally identical, there is no risk of confusing a user by using the shorter (more "readable") word instead of the longer (less "readable") word. Because "medicine" is shorter in terms of characters and syllables, the load on the user's cognitive function is lower than if you'd chosen "medication."

- That is, it's easier for a user's brain to translate the chunk of text "medicine" into the mental concept of "a pill or powder or liquid I swallow, or a fluid that a medical professional with a needle injects into my body, that will heal whatever ailment I'm suffering or prevent some future illness" than it is for a user's brain to translate the chunk of text "medication" into the same concept.



However, using acronyms (DBA instead of doing business as) and abbreviations (admin instead of administrative assistant or system administrator) can improve the readability score without making the content more understandable.

- DBA and admin are shorter than the words they replace, so readability formulae will return a “more readable” score.
- Unfortunately for users, you haven’t necessarily reduced their cognitive load.
- Translating the chunk of text DBA into the mental concept of a person doing business as a company, and doing the mental gymnastics required to decide whether admin refers to an administrative assistant or a system administrator, is not easier than reading the chunks of text doing business as, administrative assistant, and system administrator.

Exceptions that prove this rule are acronyms such as PC and RSVP that have, through common use, come to function as words instead of acronyms.

- Be careful applying this exception. An acronym that is the functional equivalent of a word to everyone you work with might remain an acronym to users outside your office space. A good example of an acronym that might seem like a word to you and a TLA to everyone else is FAQ.

Using acronyms and abbreviations can increase the cognitive load on the user even though the readability score improves.

- Consider filling out a tax form and trying to translate the chunks of text AGI, EITC, and TCE into the concepts those acronyms represent (adjusted gross income, earned income tax credit, and tax counseling for the elderly).
- In situations like that, you’d do your user a favor by making content less readable according to the formulae. You would – contrary to what the readability scores tell you – decrease a user’s cognitive load by conveying the concept in words instead of using a score-improving acronym that requires the user to exert mental energy to remember what the acronym stands for or to spend time, attention, and energy to look up the meaning in another location.

# Corporate Guidance

# Our shared brand essence

## WHY WE EXIST

**Our purpose:** We create technologies that drive human progress.

## WHAT WE DO

We bring innovation to people everywhere, and to organizations of all sizes, so they can thrive in the digital economy.

## HOW WE'RE DIFFERENT

**Technology Leadership:** We build best-in-class technologies.

**Practical Visionary:** We innovate and then democratize technology.

**Customer-Obsessed:** Serving and supporting customers is everyone's job.

**Big, Small and Open:** Scale of an enterprise; speed of a startup; freedom of choice.

## WHAT WE VALUE

Our Culture Code is the foundation for our brand voice:

### **Customers**

We believe our customer relationships are the ultimate differentiator and the foundation of our success.

### **Winning Together**

We believe in and value our people. We perform better, are smarter and have more fun working as a team than as individuals.

### **Innovation**

We believe our ability to innovate and cultivate breakthrough thinking is an engine for growth, success and progress.

### **Results**

We believe in being accountable to an exceptional standard of excellence and performance.

### **Integrity**

We believe integrity must always govern our fierce desire to win.

# Our brand voice reflects our customer-obsessed culture

When we communicate to people and organizations, they should immediately understand the benefits we can provide. They should know how our technology can help them achieve whatever they need to, today and in the future.

These five principles make up our voice:

1. We use concise, clear and straightforward language that appeals to customers across borders, languages and cultures. We do not use unnecessary superlatives, or speak with industry jargon or clichés.
2. Our language is both practical and optimistic — we choose words that demonstrate we understand and can help solve customers' challenges.
3. Our tone is natural, conversational and engaging.
4. When appropriate, we use humor in a light-hearted, clever way to make a more personal connection with customers.
5. Whenever possible, we use facts, data and real-life storytelling to differentiate us and relate to customers.

## STYLE

Content in all Dell communications should be written simply and clearly. Try to get to the point fast and avoid long, complex sentences. Eliminate unnecessary prepositional phrases and “deadwood.” Short sentences and small paragraphs help users scan the page to quickly find the information they need.

Because web content will have fewer words than its print equivalent, make the words you choose count. Avoid confusing jargon and idioms. Know your audience. While use of some technical corporate jargon is acceptable for a business audience, consumers will not be familiar with words like leverage and scalable. See also Language Use/Word Choice.

## tone

Users not only judge a publication by the style of its writing, they also respond to it emotionally. A stiff, formal tone creates emotional distance, while an overly hyped-up tone lessens credibility and cheapens the company brand.

The middle ground is a genuine, honest and transparent voice and tone that encourage a stronger, more positive connection to Dell media assets and the Dell brand. Customers have learned to spot insincerity. They have become experts at discerning when a writer is trying to manipulate their emotions. That's why it's important to write content that:

- Sounds as natural and conversational as possible.
- Avoids jargon and describes products and services without any thought to reaching sales goals.
- Avoids overstatements and exaggeration.
- Conveys enthusiasm with honesty and transparency.

In addition to our main voice principle, here are a few more guidelines:

- Lead with a solution, rather than a problem.
- Tie copy to campaigns, handover guides, etc. when possible.
- Treat customers and partners with respect. Talk to them like they're human beings, using conversational language and tone.
- Ensure continuity around the larger customer experience (i.e., have insight into where a call-to-action directs a customer/how they arrived at your page).
- Keep translations and cultural sensitivities in mind.
- Consider starting sentences with what the customer can achieve, such as "You can..." or "Be more productive..."

# About this Guide



This guide is a living document. We are striving for continuous improvement, so please let us know what is working for you and what isn't.

For comments, questions or suggestions please contact [ddd.generative.content@dell.com](mailto:ddd.generative.content@dell.com)

## **CONTENT, VOICE, AND TONE TEAM**

### **PRODUCT OWNER**

David Schlosser

### **GENERATIVE CONTENT LEADER**

Karsten Baker

### **VP DELL DIGITAL DESIGN**

Tonya Browning

### **THANKS TO**

Arturo Leal