

How can you adapt your language to achieve a desired effect upon your audience? How can you appeal to a certain demographic simply by changing the way you structure your sentences? Using language effectively in both written and spoken content can ensure that you are appealing to the right audience, at the right time.

***This guide will cover the following:***

- The importance of tone of voice
- Brand guidelines
- Adapting language to different social media platforms
- Focusing on language

## **1. Importance of tone of voice**

Why do we need to adapt our language to appeal to different audiences? Every visitor to your website, social media page, or reader of a flyer or poster has different expectations and requirements. We can't possibly begin to try to appeal to every demographic as there are too many different distinct groups of people, each with different needs, opinions, and expectations. Before we start to think about how we are going to sell a product or service, we need to understand our target audience.

Think about what they want, what they likely need, how old they are, what opinions they hold, what they are interested in, and how they would like to be addressed. When you have an idea of this, you can begin to formulate a profile for your target audience, which can be used to decide what tone of voice you should use when talking to them (either directly or indirectly).

Use the table below as an example for how you could establish which tone of voice to use.

Characteristic	Target demographic
Interests	
Age	
Location	
Wants/desires	
Needs	
Preferred means of contact	
Expectations	
Interests/what do they enjoy	

## 2. Brand guidelines

You may find that your brand has already established its voice – usually a selection of words that relate to how they want to be perceived, e.g., 'confident', 'bold', 'approachable'. If your brand doesn't yet have some keywords that describe its voice, try to think back to your target audience and what you would like them to think of when they think about your brand.

Once you have established your key tone of voice descriptors, then it is time to think about how you could apply them to your content. For example, if you want to be perceived as a brand with a personality of confidence, professionalism, and trustworthiness, then think about how someone like this would speak. Would they use slang? Probably not. They'd likely focus on avoiding contractions, slang, and personal language. Language can be shifted in many ways to suit your brand's personality and audience perceptions, so think hard about what language you're using, and how you're using it.

## 3. Adapting to social media platforms

Much like you wouldn't write a letter to a potential employer in the same way you'd send a text message to your best friend, you wouldn't put the same caption on an Instagram post as you would a LinkedIn one. They're different platforms, with different audiences, different expectations, and different features. It's easy to come up with a post and be tempted to just

copy and paste it across your social media accounts, but this isn't an effective way to use social media. Take a look at the table below for some example platforms, with what each platform is best suited for, so that you can plan out effective social media campaigns for each.

Platform	Audience	Ideal content	Ideal tone of voice
Facebook	All ages - users want authentic interactions and to be able to engage with content.	Personal content with images and videos. Content that promotes audience interaction and sharing. Focus on people stories, upcoming events, etc. Avoid content that is clearly trying to sell something.	Personal, informal, approachable
LinkedIn	Professionals – users are on the platform to grow their professional networks and engage with businesses directly.	Professional content that focuses on the business. Share content that promotes your operations, and your professional work. You could also post job listings and upcoming company promotions. This is a useful tool for business to business (B2B) communications.	Professional, formal, confident, bold
Instagram	Younger audiences – users are on the platform to view posts centred around interesting media: videos and pictures.	Images & videos. Text is usually short and related to the image. Personal or interesting content is best, so focus on engaging content.	Informal, concise, engaging, active

#### **4. Focusing on language**

Communicating appropriately for your target audience is vital for marketing. If you are able to tailor your language to suit your needs, you can target specific groups more effectively. Language is always changing and developing in new ways, with each group having a different way of interacting. If you are able to match their preferred way of communicating, both in terms of the methods of communication and the language you are using, you will be able to build better rapport with them, establish a brand with a certain image, and boost your presence among the audience that matters to you. Language is the most effective tool we have for communicating to each other, so make sure that you're actively monitoring *how* you are getting your message across, not just focusing on *what* you are saying.

**We hope that this guide helps you to better understand the importance of paying attention to how you are using language and tone of voice to communicate with target audiences. It doesn't take long to think about language more deeply, but it can be incredibly rewarding both in your own professional career and within your business.**