

THE TONE OF VOICE

Starter Guide

Use this tool to describe your tone—and learn why it's just the beginning.

INSTRUCTIONS

The next two pages after this contain word banks and tone scales to help you define your voice. Use these to describe how your brand should sound. Whether you're briefing a writer or using AI to generate content, these tools will help you check that your tone is on track.

WORD BANK

Choose 4–6 tone traits that best describe your brand voice (note: 4-6 overall, not per section; you do not need to make a selection from every section). If your current voice isn't reflective of this, that's okay. Select how you want your brand to sound or be perceived.

A quick note before you choose:

These traits describe how you want to sound, not necessarily who you are or what you do. For example:

- Analytical means sounding methodical and data-driven, not just using more data in your work.
- Friendly means using warm, approachable language, not just being nice to customers in person.
- Bold means taking a strong, unapologetic stance in your messaging, not just having big goals.
- Calm means keeping your tone steady and measured, not just feeling calm while you work.
- Sophisticated means choosing refined, elevated language, not just selling a high-end product.

Think of it this way—if someone reads your words out loud, these traits describe the style they'd hear.

If you'd like to see these traits explained further, [view this cheat sheet](#).

TONE OF VOICE TRAITS - WORD BANK

Clarity & Simplicity

These words signal focus, ease, and straightforwardness.

Clear	Concise
Direct	Straightforward
Confident	Uncluttered
Crisp	Focused
Practical	

Voice & Presence

How your brand shows up—its posture in a conversation.

Bold	Relatable
Confident	Authoritative
Approachable	Professional
Friendly	Punchy
Conversational	

Vibe & Energy

Overall mood, volume, or intensity of your brand.

Calm	Intense
High-energy	Playful
Lighthearted	Witty
Upbeat	Quirky
Chill	Fun

Tone & Intelligence

Your brand's level of insight, depth, and thinking.

Smart	Curious
Strategic	Thoughtful
Insightful	Persuasive
Analytical	Educated

Trust & Connection

Words that make people feel safe, seen, and supported.

Warm	Human
Supportive	Empathetic
Honest	Reliable
Transparent	Inviting
Reassuring	

Style & Personality

The style and attitude you bring—your edge, flair, or flavor.

Sophisticated	Refined
Edgy	Quirky
Whimsical	Stylish
Snarky	Modern

**repeated intentionally—it often fits multiple places*

Aspirational Traits

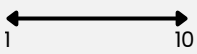
Are there qualities you're not fully known for yet, but would like to be? Use this space to name 1–2 tone traits you'd like your brand to grow into over time. These might not fully describe you today, but they represent where you're headed or how you want to be perceived.

If you list aspirational traits, we'll weave them into your messaging where it feels natural—helping your brand sound a little more like where you're going, without losing the voice you have today. If you don't list any, we'll focus fully on your current tone traits.

tone of voice scales

Use these scales to identify your voice. For each one, indicate on the right side of the page in the blanks provided where you fall in the scale using numbers 1-10.

Your #

Formality	Formal + professional		Casual + conversational
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1-3: We are pleased to inform you...
 4-7: We're excited to share some updates...
 8-10: Here's the scoop on what's new!

Brand Examples:
 Formal: Deloitte, Harvard Business Review
 Casual: Mailchimp, Buffer

Energy	Calm + measured		High-energy + dynamic
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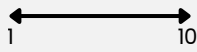
1-3: Let's take a step-by-step look.
 4-7: Here's what you need to know—fast.
 8-10: Let's GO. This changes everything!

Brand Examples:
 Calm: Headspace, Basecamp
 High-Energy: Peloton, Duolingo

Clarity	Detailed + technical		Approachable + streamlined
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1-3: We leverage integrated machine learning solutions.
 4-7: We use data tools to help you work smarter.
 8-10: You don't need a data team. Just clear answers.

Brand Examples:
 Technical: Oracle, SAP
 Approachable: Asana, ConvertKit

Playfulness	Serious + authoritative		Quirky + fun
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1-3: Our methodology ensures rigor and precision.
 4-7: We break down complex ideas so they're easier to act on.
 8-10: We're allergic to jargon and love a good emoji.

Brand Examples:
 Serious: McKinsey, IBM
 Playful: Notion, Canva, Pop-Tarts

Warmth	Neutral/Direct/Detached		Friendly + empathetic
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1-3: Here is your invoice. Due within 30 days.
 4-7: Here's your invoice—let us know if you need anything.
 8-10: Hey there! Just a heads up your invoice is ready—thanks so much!

Brand Examples:
 Neutral: QuickBooks, Stripe
 Friendly: HoneyBook, ConvertKit, FreshBooks

Personality	Reserved + traditional		Bold + expressive
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1-3: We provide tailored solutions across key markets.
 4-7: We're here to help you do better work, with less friction.
 8-10: We get it. You're juggling a million things—this helps.

Brand Examples:
 Reserved: Salesforce, Microsoft
 Expressive: Slack, Glossier, Wendy's (on Twitter)

Voice Structure	Long-form, narrative		Short, to the point
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1-3: In today's fast-paced digital environment, businesses are constantly seeking innovative ways to streamline operations and drive long-term value. That's why we've developed a multi-step framework to...(Lots of setup, multi-paragraph structure)
 4-7: We walk you through a few key steps so you can make better decisions—faster. Here's how it works...(Still explanatory, but more concise)
 8-10: Clear answers. Fast results. No fluff. (Short, sharp, skimmable — often bullet-style)

Brand Examples:
 Long-form, narrative: Patagonia, Harvard Business Review
 Short, to the point: Stripe, Figma, Morning Brew

NEXT STEPS

You now have usable tone scales and a word bank to help you define your voice. Share this with anyone on your team who creates content for your brand, including uploading to AI when creating copy.

But tone isn't your whole brand voice—it's just one part of the system that drives consistent content.

Tone is how you sound. But what are you actually saying?

Tone is important—it shapes the *delivery* of your message. How you *sound*.

Without a clear foundation behind it, you're just changing outfits with no direction. It doesn't tell you *what* to say, just *how* to say it.

To create brand-aligned content, you also need to define the core elements that guide *what* you say.

That includes:

- Mission Statement – Why you exist
- Vision Statement – Where you're going
- Brand Promise – What you deliver
- Values – What you believe in
- Positioning Statement – How you're different
- Target Audience & Persona – Who you're speaking to
- Elevator Pitch – How you explain yourself quickly in conversation
- Brand Pillars – What you want to be known for
- Messaging Themes – What you consistently talk about
- One-liner, 50-worder, and 100-worder "about" statements
- Voice Guardrails – What *not* to say
- Plus the tone info you just did!

ENTER: THE BRAND VOICE BLUEPRINT

The Brand Voice Blueprint helps you define more than just tone. It walks you step-by-step through everything you need to create a voice that's strategic, distinctive, and easy to apply—whether you're writing it yourself or handing it off to a team (or AI).

HOW IT WORKS:

- 1) You'll answer 17 foundational questions via Jotform about your brand that outline what you do, who you serve, and why you do what you do.
- 2) You will use the answers to these questions in a CustomGPT where you'll choose tone traits, identify where you fall on tone spectrums (e.g. casual vs formal, serious vs playful), and other style preferences.
- 3) The CustomGPT will generate the components for your final Brand Voice Blueprint. Share this with your team (especially new members), your copywriters, your designers, freelancers, or just for yourself to reference anytime you're creating brand content.

Bonus: Also included with this toolkit is The Brand Voice in Action. This step-by-step guide shows you exactly how to apply your Brand Voice Blueprint to your content, your team, and your AI tools so your brand sounds clear and consistent everywhere. This includes:

- A simple content audit process to check your website, emails, and social posts
- 18 ready-to-use ChatGPT prompts for creating consistent, on-brand content, including prompts for repurposing content, writing headlines, onboarding new team members, and more

You've made a solid start by defining your tone.

Now complete your full voice by defining what you actually say.

www.thebrandvoiceblueprint.com