



*Our Voice*

## Only got two minutes?

---

We know not everyone is going to read this whole document (sniff), even though we really hope you will. So if you're short on time but want a quick overview, remembering these five principles will help set you on the right path.

### 1. It's about them, not us.

We write for the benefit of our travellers, not Skyscanner, by addressing their painpoints and showing how we add value to their lives.

**No:** Skyscanner reveals best time to book Christmas flights in 2018.

**Yes:** Flying at Christmas? Discover the best time to book.

### 2. We make positive connections.

When figuring out what to say, think about these four parts of the traveller:

**Head:** Be savvy and give people the facts.

**Heart:** Be caring by showing empathy and consideration.

**Gut:** Be straightforward by using language everyone understands.

**Feet:** Be energetic by using active

language and showing them what to do next.

### 3. We talk to travellers, not 'users'.

We're all people. So we speak to each other like people.

- You
- We
- Our
- Us

**Not:** Skyscanner, the company, the user, the customer.

### 4. We like having conversations.

Because we want to interact with our travellers, not talk at them.

- Got it?
- Can't find it?
- Isn't that nice?

and use conversational asides:

- OK, now...
- Right?
- Sure, but...
- Well,...

**Example:** 'OK, now just check your inbox for your confirmation number. Got it? Great. You can use this to track your booking.'

### 5. We're ever-so polite.

That means we always say our Ps and Qs.

- Please
- Thank you.
- Thanks!
- You're welcome!

**Example:** 'Please type your email address here.'



Want to know more? Keep reading for a deep dive into how we think and talk, as well as some practical examples. And if you need to know more or have feedback, you can find us at **#copywriting** on Slack.

## Contents

---

### Our voice

---

Introduction	4
How we think	6
Our attitude	7
Our tone	9
How to do it	11

### Appendix: examples

---

Welcome messages	18
Error messages	20
Legal information	23
Marketing newsletters	25
Destination articles	28
Social media posts	30

Hello there.

If you're reading this, it means you help Skyscanner do what we do.  
You're a part of the Skyscanner story.

So, first of all: thanks!

Now, here's a question.

### Are you good at conversation?

We're not just asking whether you've got things to say.

Because *really* talking to people means listening, too.



### Let's try a (fun!) quiz.

You're at a friend's barbecue and start talking to a stranger. Turns out, they've got lots of good knowledge but you start getting bored, because they just keep going on about themselves.

You try a turn at speaking. But you can see their eyes glaze over and they just turn the conversation back to themselves again.

Are you thinking:

**A** *I want to spend the rest of the evening with this person.*

**B** *How can I make a run for it?*

Yep, we'd be looking for the exit too.

Now, you're probably wondering why we're talking about awkward barbecues.

But meeting this terrible person is not unlike when you interact with a company. One that isn't really listening to customers.

At Skyscanner, we want to have proper conversations with travellers — whether we're writing error messages, log in instructions or legal documents — where we listen, and respond.

The key to having these good conversations, though, is **our voice**.

How we think

### Our voice is a reflection of how we think and our opinions on stuff. So: how do we think? And what are our opinions?

The answer can be found right back at the beginning of our story: when Skyscanner first began.

It all started with our very simple idea: to make finding the best flight prices easy.

It was a very simple idea but also a very good one. And that's why, today, more than 70 million people use us every month.

**70 million! That's quite a few.**

But you know what? Our idea wasn't just simple and good. It was a lot of other things too. Things that say a lot about how Skyscanner **THINKS** today.

We put travellers first. We want to put them before us each and every time.

We believe in **providing value** to our travellers rather than just extracting it. And to make them feel as if we've got their back in every situation.

This makes us quite different.

We're an **ethical challenger** to the travel industry norm.

That's how we started, and that's how we are today.

We shook travel up once and now we're doing it again — by helping travellers with their entire trip, not just flights, and providing outstanding customer service.

And that makes our attitude different to most companies.

Here's how...



Yes:	No:	Why?:
We <b>want</b> to spread our love and joy of travel	We're <b>not</b> functional, formal or all business	Travel is about good times. <i>We're</i> about good times. We genuinely care about the difference travel can make in a person's life, because we are travellers too.
We <b>promise</b> to go out of our way to fix stuff	We <b>don't</b> hide, make excuses or pass the buck	We don't wait for someone to ask us to go the extra mile, we go the extra mile already because putting travellers first is what we're all about.
We're <b>happy</b> to show how it all works	We <b>don't</b> hide information or fudge facts	Business is sometimes a murky, well, business. But we want to be transparent about what goes on 'behind the scenes' and how we make our money.

This attitude is reflected in how we talk.

But just like any proper conversation, there is one more thing we need to add — **Our Tone**.

Our tone



### Putting the traveller first means putting them at the heart of every conversation. Enter...drumroll...our tone of voice!

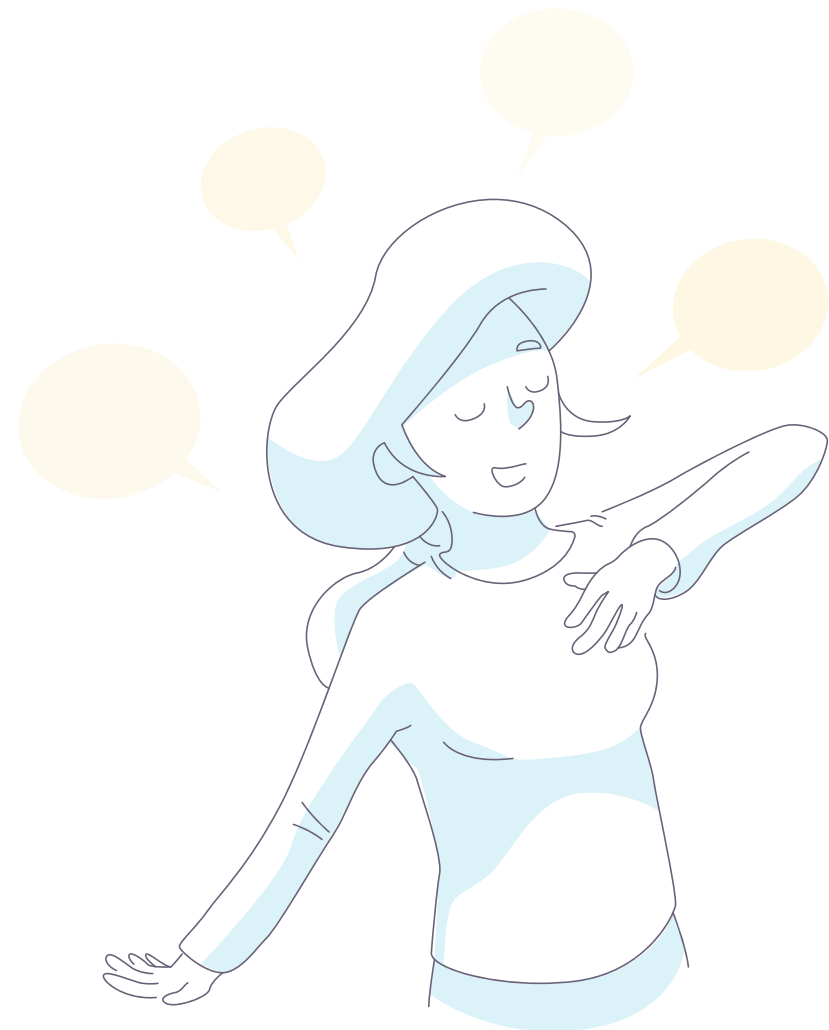
Our tone is crucial. Because, even if we know what we want to say, the message gets lost if we don't say it the **right** way.

Imagine someone asks how you're doing. And you say: "Great."

Say it in an upbeat, positive tone, and people will believe you're loving life.

But say it while exhaling a downcast sigh, and no one's going to believe you. (Fair enough, that barbecue was the worst).

So, to make sure we put the traveller at the heart of every conversation, these are the **principles** of our tone of voice:





### Savvy

We get to the point and give people the information they need. We talk about benefits — rather than just features — so our travellers can make the best choices and decisions possible.



### Caring

We're wired to pick up on our travellers thoughts and feelings which makes us considerate and empathetic at all times. Whenever we write, we show we care about them and their journey.



### Straightforward

We're all human and we talk to each other like humans. We help travellers to trust us by using language everyone understands (we don't bamboozle them with jargon or business speak).



### Energetic

We speak with conviction and passion, using the active language and future-focused words. We're the always-happy-to-help type who encourages and empowers travellers (and wants to make them laugh).

### Making positive connections

Now it's time to look at how we put all that together to help us make a positive connection whenever we write.

The easiest way to nail this? Yup, you got it. **Put the traveller first.**

That gets even easier if we think of four 'points of connection' with our travellers.

Think about how we all make decisions. Different parts of us come into play depending on the nature of what it is we're deciding.

So, when we're talking to the traveller, think about each of these parts...





### Head

**Tone:** Savvy

This is the logical part of a person that wants to feel informed. We always want to give our travellers the **facts**.



### Heart

**Tone:** Caring

This is the emotional part that wants to feel understood and looked after. We want to show our travellers **empathy** at all times.



### Gut

**Tone:** Straightforward

This is intuition — the part of a person that susses something out, not just by what gets said, but how. We're always straightforward and **honest**.



### Feet

**Tone:** Energetic

This is the get-up-and-go. We want to create **energy** by showing our travellers how we can help or what they can do next.

Your message might not need to talk to all these parts of the traveller at once, but we should try to appeal to as many as possible.



### How about an example?

OK, imagine someone emailed us to ask why they couldn't book a plane ticket more than a year in advance.

This is a genuine example of our automated response. Get ready to cringe.

*“Due to international practice and business considerations, most airline tickets are only available 12 months in advance. Skyscanner shows airline prices 12 months ahead, although there might be airlines that have not yet released complete schedules for the full period. If you have a query about a specific route far in advance, I can recommend that you check which airlines do this particular route and contact them directly with your query.”*

Wow. If you read that, would you think we were different or better than the industry norm? Would you feel we were putting the traveller first? Does this feel like a proper conversation?

### Right, let's try it with the tone of voice we were just talking about:

*"OK, we've got good news and bad news.*

*Most airlines only let you book up to a year ahead. Some, even less. They've not figured out their schedules that far in advance.*

*Still, let's not give up. If you really want to book more than a year in advance, then check out which airlines fly the route you want. (We can help you with that, [right here](#). Then, contact them directly — give them a call, or shoot them an email — and ask if they can help.*

*If you get stuck, send us a [message](#) and we'll see if there's anything we can do to get your trip sorted."*

As well as being helpful, that's the sort of email that gets remembered. That's because we spoke to the whole traveller. We gave them the facts (**head**) removed the jargon and became more straightforward (**gut**). We also showed that we care about solving their problem (**heart**) and explained what to do next (**feet**).

They'll likely leave that exchange thinking we've gone out of our way to help them.

That's how the way we **talk**, shows how we **think**, and strikes the right **tone**.

## How about another?

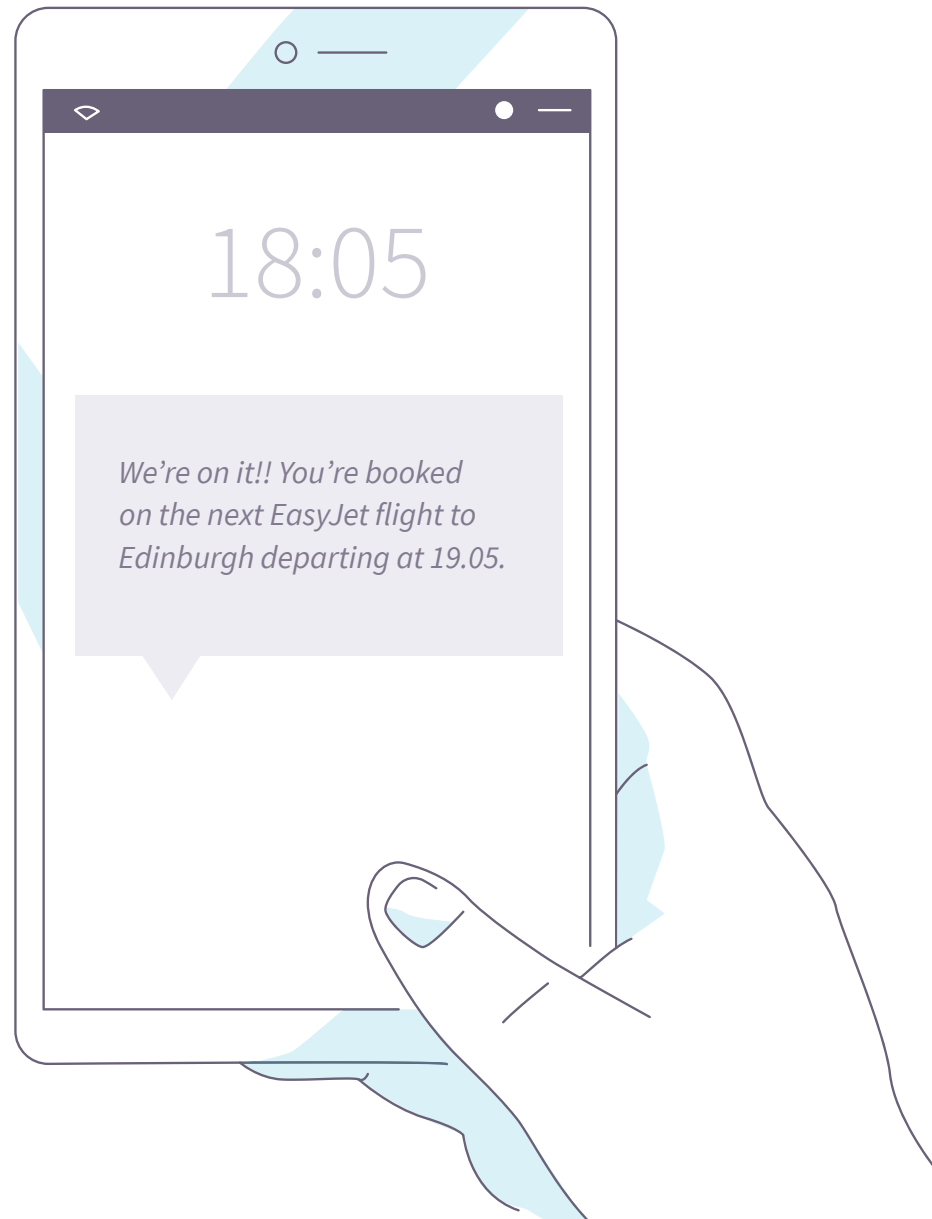
### Imagine this:

A family with two young kids have missed their flight connection and the parents are super-stressed about how they're going to get home.

Pulses are racing, stomachs churning, the kids are crying.

Skyscanner is going to send them a message. It needs to appeal to the part of them that wants information — the **head**. But it also has to reassure them that we've got their back and we're looking out for them — the **heart**. Then we show them what action to take next — the **feet**. And we need to say all this in a straightforward way — the **gut**.

The alert says:



### Why does this work?

We got to the point, we gave them details and our tone reassured them. It was said in an upbeat, friendly, but accurate way.

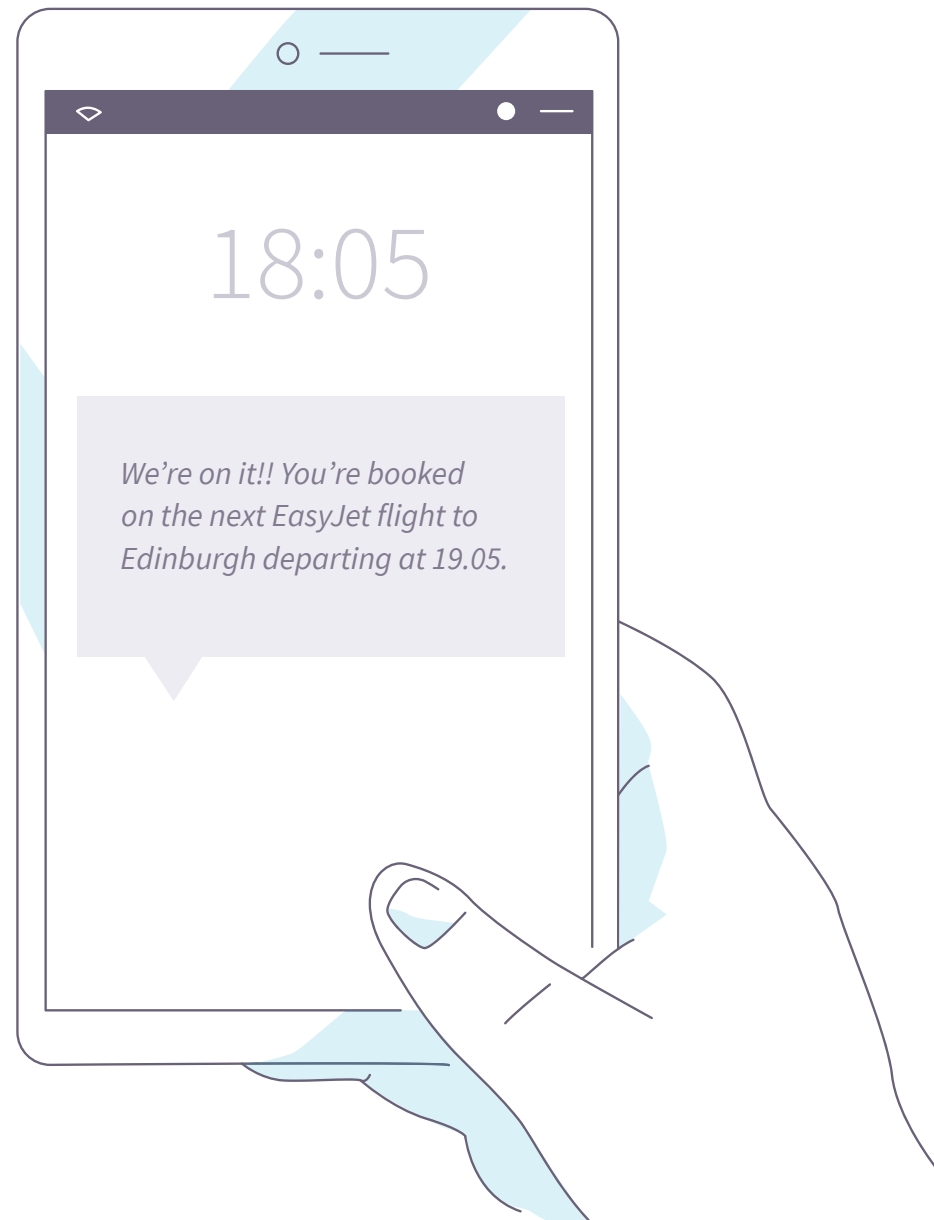
So each time you write, think about these four parts of the traveller and the ones you're going to lead with.

If they're just looking for simple, factual information, focus on that, but we still need to be **empathetic** to show them we care.

If it's a situation where people want a feel for a destination, then go big on energetic and draw them in with a sense of adventure. While also giving information and facts.

You get the idea. Proper conversations come from **putting the traveller first**, understanding the situation they're in and responding in a way that makes sure they have a positive and useful experience when they interact with us.

Read on for some more practical examples...





# Appendix: examples

### Welcome messages

When you welcome someone, it's probably your first interaction with them.

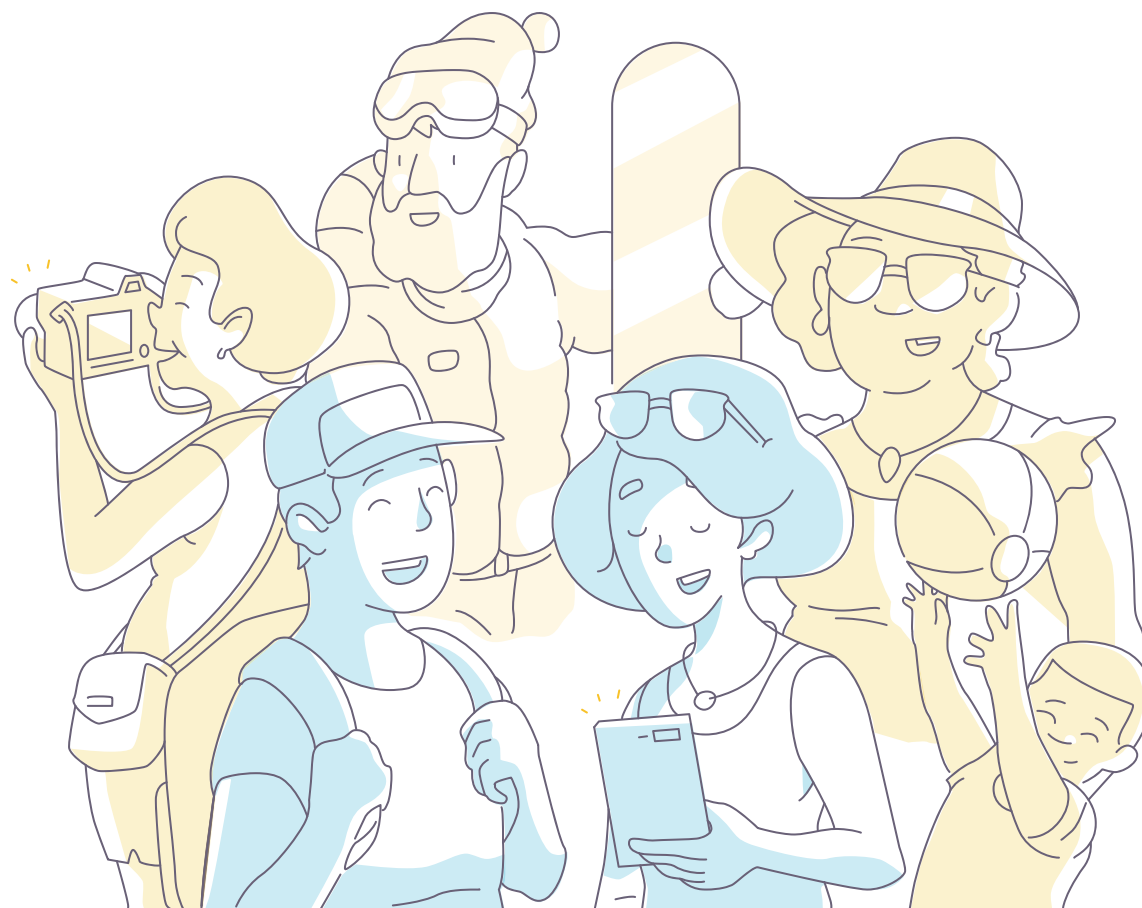
And first impressions count.

Our welcome messages need to do something different. They shouldn't be all 'me, me, me'.

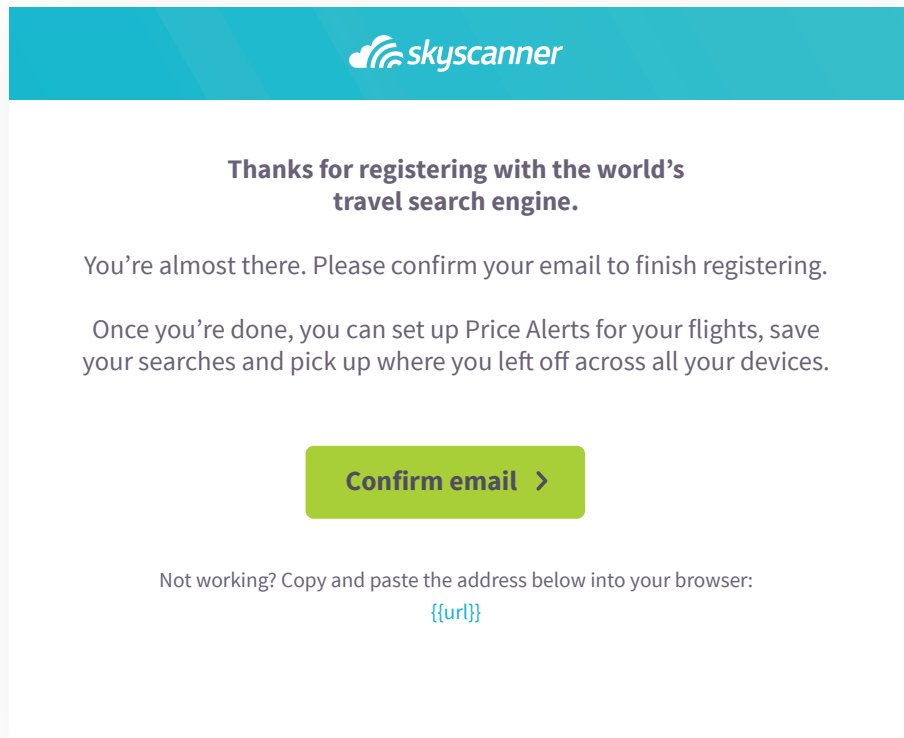
Instead, they should tell our travellers that **they're our priority**. They should be more 'you, you, you.'

Think of it as like welcoming someone into our house. But, instead of showing off about what an amazing house we've got and bragging about it's features, we're showing them how to get the most out of their stay with us.

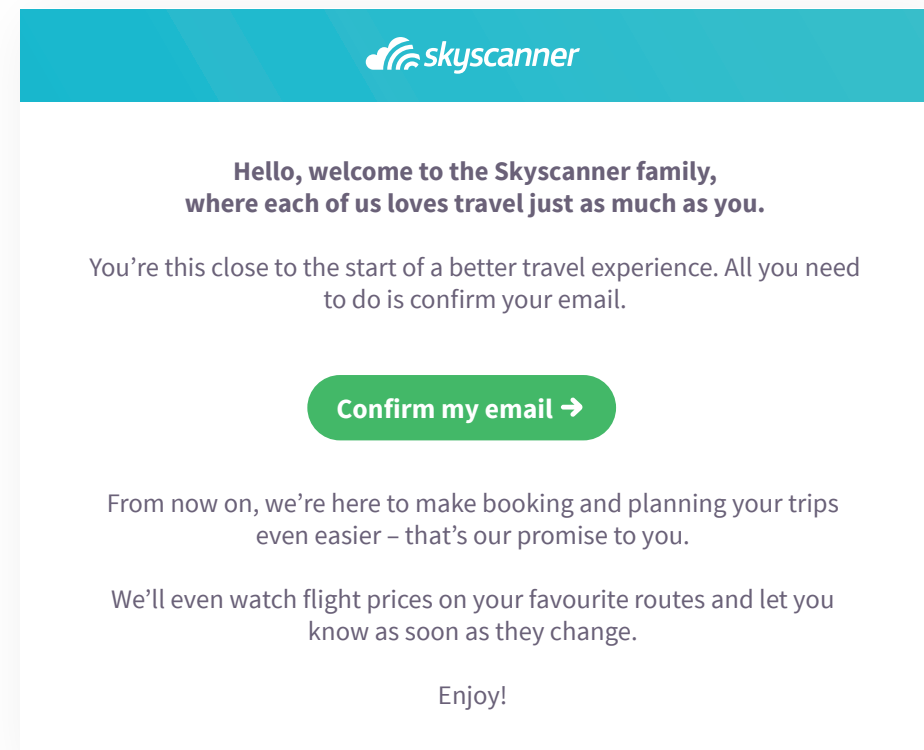
Always remember: the focus is **them**, not **us**.



## Welcome messages



- ✗ The headline is all about Skyscanner
- ✗ We use functional language 'engine', 'prices', 'searches', 'devices'
- ✗ We don't convey that we care about travel or our travellers
- ✗ We list feature sets rather than explaining the benefits of our product



- ✓ We use inclusive, warm, and welcoming language
- ✓ We make it clear to the traveller that we are here for them
- ✓ We explain the benefits of our features, such as Price Alerts

### Error messages

We all know that little jolt of fear when a big red error message pops up on screen. It's cortisol, the stress hormones that makes us feel anxious and, if not dealt with, despair.

When we despair we give up. And we don't want our travellers to give up. We need to help fix problems quickly and easily.

#### Basics

When we write error messages, try to follow these general pointers:

- Clearly explain what has gone wrong
- Empathise, don't blame the traveller
- Use straightforward, natural human language
- Show them what to do next



## Error messages

### Traveller Problem

There is an unknown failure and we cannot load content:

**Error**

It's not possible to load this page. Check your connection and try again.

**Sorry, we couldn't load those details.**

We're disappointed too. Please check your internet connection and try again.

- ✗ *Our language is too functional and formal*
- ✗ *We don't empathise with the traveller's frustration*
- ✗ *We are instructing the traveller to do something, rather than asking*

- ✓ *We apologise for the inconvenience*
- ✓ *We relate and empathise*
- ✓ *We are polite and ask the traveller to take a next step*

## Error messages – useful phrases and words

Step 1 – Useful phrases: Explain don't blame	Step 2 – Useful phrases: Reassure, resolve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We're sorry</li><li>• Oh no</li><li>• Please bear with us</li><li>• Thank you</li><li>• We realise</li><li>• We understand</li><li>• Something's gone wrong</li><li>• It looks like</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We're on this</li><li>• We've got this</li><li>• Try [x] instead</li><li>• We're looking into it</li><li>• Don't worry</li><li>• Straight away</li><li>• As soon as we can</li><li>• We'll be in touch</li><li>• On the case</li><li>• We'll let you know</li></ul>

## Legal information

Booking a trip is an awesome feeling. But to make sure someone's journey with Skyscanner lives up to that buzz, we'll often need to deliver important legal information.

And by 'important information', we mean anything from terms and conditions to flight details.

Now, we don't want to be a **buzz-kill**. But we do need to make sure this information is properly delivered.

That can mean a tricky balance between being conveying the message in a clear and coherent way, and making sure our travellers still feel good about booking their trip with us.

Let's use **cookie permissions** as an example.



## Legal information

### Skyscanner uses cookies



Find out more about what they are and how to opt out, in our [Cookie Policy](#).

OK

- ✗ *The message is about Skyscanner and not about how the information relates to the traveller*
- ✗ *It's not caring or empathetic*
- ✗ *We are making a statement about cookies, rather than giving an explanation*

Instead, it should feel like an interaction; like part of a conversation.

### Your data. Your Choice.



We collect information about how and when you use our website so we can create a better experience and show you more relevant ads. Find out more about how to opt out in our [Cookie Policy](#).

OK

- ✓ *The headline tells the traveller why they should care about cookies*
- ✓ *We put the traveller in control*
- ✓ *We are reassuring them that we want them to see this message, rather than trying to sneak it past them*
- ✓ *We directly address travellers ('you') and make sure they're informed of their rights*



### Marketing newsletters

When done well, marketing newsletters feel like a chat with a friend. They're casual, full of personality, and — most importantly — they feel tailored to the people who read them. The newsletter talks about things they're interested in.

When done badly, marketing newsletters feel like the internet equivalent of an annoying door-to-door salesman.

A person's inbox is very much their personal space.

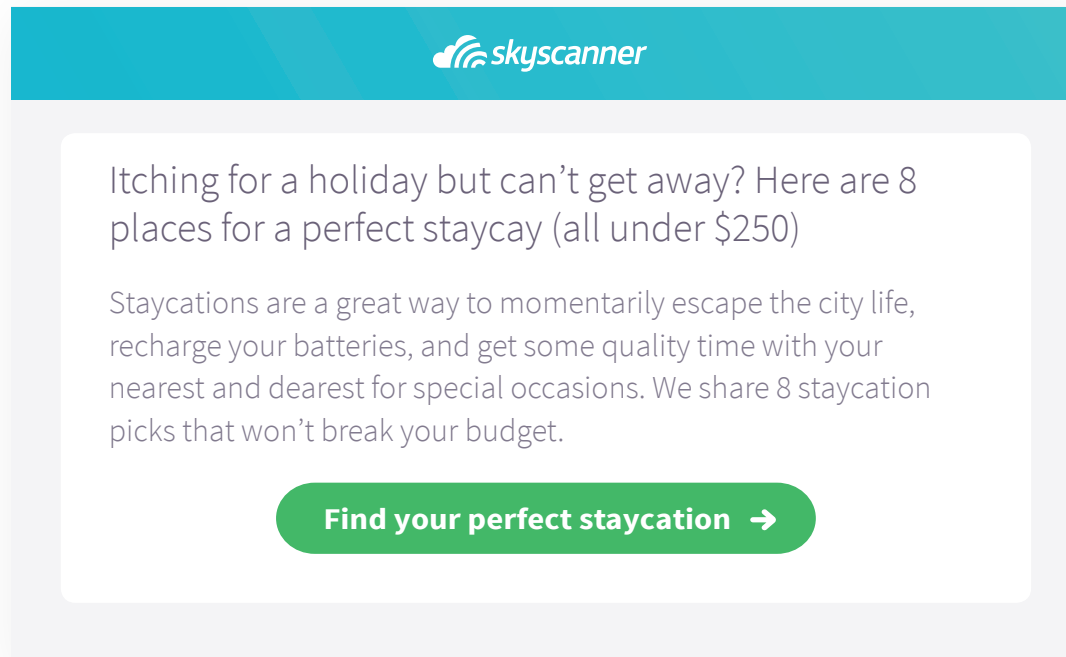
But what if they're offered something that genuinely adds value to their lives?

What if the newsletter is fun to read, and tells them something they didn't know that will benefit them?

That newsletter suddenly feels much less like an intrusion into their precious time.




## Marketing newsletters



- ✗ *If the traveller doesn't relate to the question being asked in the headline, they will probably disconnect from the copy*
- ✗ *'Escape the city life' doesn't make sense to people who don't live in the city*
- ✗ *'Nearest and dearest' makes us sound like we write greetings cards and isn't something people generally say*

Instead, how about:



A weekend in an Airstream, a wine tour on the back of a tractor, and more staycays for under \$250

Don't know about you, but we're feeling pretty broke right now. We felt totally better when we started looking into staycations, though — and found loads of great, affordable stuff. Check out the ideas that got us really psyched.

**Staycay ideas we love →**

### Top tip!

With newsletters, it's a good idea not to lead with a 'buy stuff' message and instead go with 'Check out these cool things we found that we think you might like, too.'

- ✓ *We're talking about what we like as travel experts, so it seems like info that's worth knowing*
- ✓ *We use fun-sounding examples to get people excited and create intrigue*
- ✓ *We deliver the facts that make it all sound possible: these experiences are close to home and affordable*
- ✓ *Fundamentally, it doesn't sound so much like a sales pitch*

## Destination articles

Great travel writing doesn't mean using lots of adjectives.

It means making sure every sentence we write is helpful and genuine. Here are some general pointers:

### 1. Be specific

We can't really help someone by being vague. If we say, 'The hotel is a short walk from the train station,' that's not helpful — because what do we mean by 'short'? But if we say, 'The hotel is an easy mile's walk from the train station,' we're giving people information they can use.

### 2. Be easy to understand

The best writing doesn't sound like you're trying to be too clever — it just sounds natural. Say what you mean, and say it clearly.

### 3. Be personal

Why should people trust what you're saying? Use your experience to show them you know what you're talking about. So, don't say 'The food is delicious.' That doesn't tell anyone anything, really. Do say, 'The restaurant fuses Italian and Californian flavours. Their short rib with gnocchi is really smoky and rich.'

### 4. Be interesting

Travel is exciting, so we shouldn't make it sound boring. 'The museum has lots of historical artifacts' = zzzzz. But 'the museum is awesome — I saw a collection of real-life shrunken heads' sounds pretty interesting, doesn't it?

### 5. Be honest

We want people to make informed choices that give them a good experience. So if there is something you think might bother people, tell them — but in a positive way. So you might say: 'This hotel is great: friendly staff, comfy beds and value for money. But you will need to be comfortable with shared bathrooms.' Or: 'This is one of the best hotels I've ever stayed in — but it's also one of the most expensive.'

## Destination articles

*“Fabulous restaurant in a fantastic location in Udaipur, that ticks all the boxes. The atmosphere is incredible, whether for a business meeting or for a family lunch. The food is delicious, always prepared from scratch. The service is spot on. And the prices are more than reasonable given what you get. Recommended.”*

- ✗ *It’s a fantastic location and the atmosphere is incredible — but why?*
- ✗ *The food is delicious but what about a description of what it’s actually like?*
- ✗ *Yay, the prices are reasonable! But, er, what are they?*

*“This restaurant has one of the best locations in Udaipur, right on the shore of Lake Pichola. Grab an outdoor table, and you’ll get an amazing view of the City Palace (especially magical when it’s lit up at night, and the colours reflect on the water). Don’t miss the raan: an unbelievably tender roast leg of lamb (I think I actually drooled on it). This is a pricier option than your usual dirt-cheap Indian restaurant — dishes start at about 500 rupees (£6) — but the quality, portions and setting are worth it. It gets insanely busy, so it’s a good idea to book ahead.”*

- ✓ *Anecdotes achieve a lot more than throwaway statements*
- ✓ *We are specific and provide useful, insightful information*
- ✓ *We are giving people a sense of what it’s actually like to experience this place, creating a picture in their head of what it’s like to be there*

All in all, if you just follow the rules, it’s pretty simple. And it’s fun to show people cool stuff — so why not show them as much cool stuff as we can?

## Social media posts

While the overall goal of social media is conversation, we do need to make sure our travellers are getting something out of each post.

That means making sure our social media activity is **relevant** and **useful**. Posts should, ultimately, encourage our travellers to take **action**.

That doesn't necessarily mean we want them to click on a link or buy something. Instead, it might mean they join a conversation, or are able to adjust their travel plans around a breaking news event. Maybe it means they'll take an interest in a destination they'd never heard of before.

Basically, we're saying that our chat should be relevant, useful, valuable and/or inspiring to our travellers.

### Twitter

- **Best for:** Real-time news and updates; speedy responses to queries and complaints; amplification of inspiration and tips.
- **Style:** Short, simple, smart. GIFs and emojis where fun and effective. You've got 280 characters, but on this fast-moving platform, less is more.

### Facebook

- **Best for:** Real-time news and updates; product marketing; amplification of inspiration and tips.
- **Style:** Short, smart, newsy. Use super-engaging videos and images. Aim for 1-2 sentences; no more than four. No one wants to read an essay.

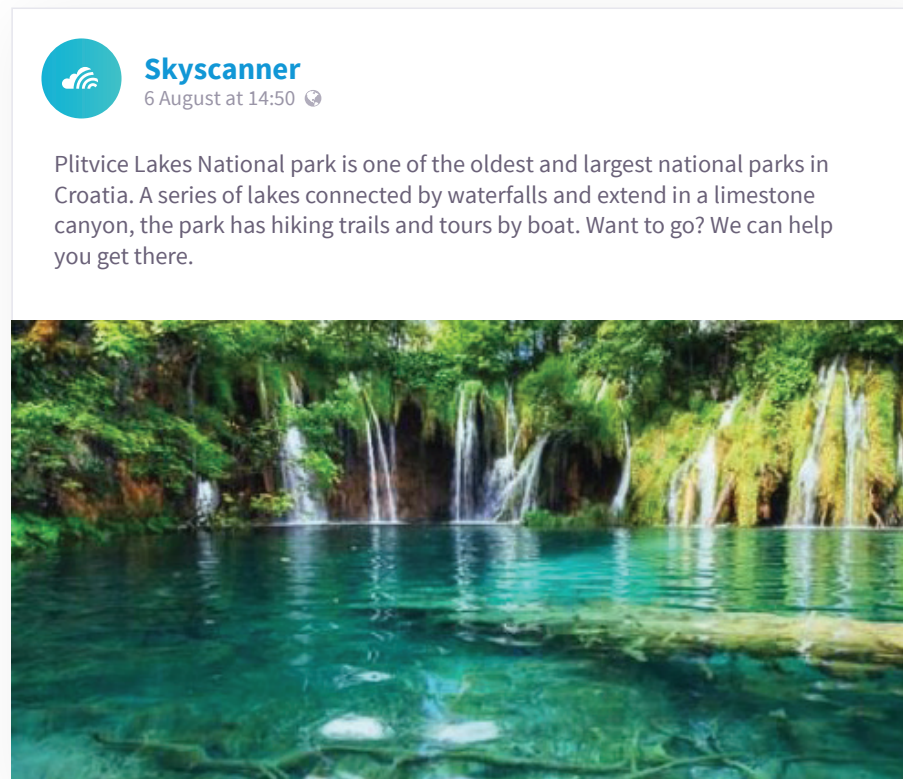
### LinkedIn

- **Best for:** Product news, recruiting content, media mentions, professional tips and advice.
- **Style:** We need to use a voice that embodies Skyscanner values, but this is a professional space, so the tone should be a little more **polished**. Still, to let our personality shine, we ought to remain **light and conversational**.
- **Don't** go mad on GIFs and emojis, but the odd one here or there can add personality (such as 🍷, but nothing too wild or random, like 🐸).

## Social media posts

### Example

Take a look at this recent post on our Facebook account:



- ✗ *The words are not as **punchy and impactful** as the picture*
- ✗ *This particular post doesn't follow the rules of **short, smart and newsy***
- ✗ *The tone, too, is overly formal. 'A series of lakes connected by waterfalls and extend in a limestone canyon' isn't exactly the sort of thing you'd say in conversation*

Instead, think about what we're trying to do here. We want to get people excited about the idea of going to this place.

## Social media posts

### Example

So why not write:



**Skyscanner**

6 August at 14:50 🌐

Can you guess where this incredible, little-known national park is? Plitvice Lakes is one of Croatia's best-kept secrets. Want to go there before everyone else does? We've got an [app for that](#).



- ✓ *The first two sentences are playing to the same emotions stirred by the photo*
- ✓ *The next two sentences inspire people to go beyond the fantasy and make it real*
- ✓ *We're helpful — we show them that we're the people who can help them get there*



## Finally... A word on tags

We rarely use **hashtags**. As a brand striving for authenticity, we don't want to be leaping onto every fad or trend. The only appropriate moments for a hashtag are:

- If we're promoting an event we're hosting or appearing at
- If our post is offering information that directly relates to news affecting our travellers, such as #lombokearthquake

Only tag **other users** if you're replying to their query, they've established a conversation with you, or we've been directly working with them.

Don't ask for likes, retweets or favourites. It's, well, a little desperate.



**Skyscanner** ✈️🌐 @skyscanner

August which means it's official time for [@edfringe](#) 🎪 expert Fringe hacks [here!](#)



**Skyscanner** ✈️🌐 @skyscanner

Yo [@edfringe](#), can you RT this [article](#) we wrote about you?



Thinking of something that isn't covered in this document but should be?  
Get in touch at **#copywriting** on Slack.