Editing checklist

Check your writing against these 10 points for clear and concise copy.

1. Use simple words

Short, simple words are preferable to fancy ones.

Don't say You can now utilize the new Publishers dashboard to monitor download activity.
Instead, say Use the new Publishers dashboard to monitor downloads.

2. Main point first

When you are describing a goal and the action needed to achieve it, start the sentence with the goal.

Don't say Log in to your account to access this image group
Instead, say To access this image group, log in to your account

3. Be concise

It's worth saying again: The way we write is simple and direct.

Don't say Would you like to save your changes?
Instead, say Save changes?

4. Be positive

Emphasize the action a user can take, not the action they can't.

Don't say You're not authorized to view this page.
Instead, say To sign in, you must be an authorized user.

5. Avoid jargon, idioms, and slang

Communications need to be understood by users the world over. Even the most common expressions in the US aren't always understandable in other countries. "Catch you later" for "goodbye" or "no problem" instead of "you're welcome" can lead to confusion. Jargon and internal terminology are also to be avoided.

Don't say Buffering…
Instead, say Video is loading

6. Be consistent

Use the same wording to refer to the same items and actions; don't talk about the archive in one paragraph and switch to database in the next.

7. Stay active

Avoid passive voice. Use active verbs and direct forms of speech whenever possible. It's clearer and sounds more personal. Things aren't done, we do things. It's clearer, and it sounds better.

Don't say Expanded access has been extended through December 31.
Instead, say We are extending expanded access through December 31.

8. Avoid negative constructions

Don't say You cannot access the content without signing up.
Instead, say Sign up to access the content.

9. Use contractions

Contractions sound more conversational.

Don't say Do not hesitate to get in touch with us.
Instead, say Don't hesitate to reach out.

10. Read it aloud

If it doesn't sound right, it doesn't read right either. It's also a good way to catch typos and errors.