Word Choice

Best Practices

Negative Phrasing	Positive Phrasing
• Focuses on what not to do and the negative consequences • Doesn't offer solutions	• Focuses on what you should do and the positive outcomes • Offers options
Negative Words to Avoid	**Positive Words to Use**
• Don't • Not • Can't	• Can • Will • Do

Example:

"I am not the person to help you understand your financial aid situation. You will need to email sfs@franklin.edu to get this figured out"	*Negative phrasing caused by **not**. Only tells the student where not to go for the information instead of saying where to go for that information.*
"Please contact our Student Financial Services team at sfs@franklin.edu for assistance in understanding your financial aid situation."	*Positive phrasing because it provides the student with direction on where to go for what answers.*

Exclusive Language	Inclusive Language
• Gendered • Disability-first • Specialized knowledge	• Gender-neutral • People-first • Universal phrases
Exclusive Words to Avoid	**Inclusive Words to Use**
• Guys • Deaf people • Under Par, Grand Slam, etc.	• Folks • People who are hearing impaired • Great job

Example:

"You passed your MATH 215 class by the skin of your teeth"	*Exclusive language caused by **'skin of your teeth'**. This is an idiom that everyone may not know. Could lead to miscommunications and confusion.*
"You passed your MATH 215 class by 2 points"	*Inclusive language because no idioms. Used the precise word to describe grade in class. Does not require specialized knowledge.*

Filler words	Filler Phrases
• Basically • Just • Actually	• At the end of the day • You know • Kind of

Example:

"Just wanted to let you know that you are basically done with your courses and are ready to graduate."	*Filler words 'just' and 'basically' create unnecessarily long and ambiguous sentence.*
"You are done with your required courses and are ready to graduate."	*Removing the filler words created a shorter and more concise sentence.*