

Writing Style

When choosing words for your app:

1. **Keep it brief.** Be concise, simple and precise. Start with a 30 character limit (including spaces), and don't use more unless absolutely necessary.
2. **Keep it simple.** Pretend you're speaking to someone who's smart and competent, but doesn't know technical jargon and may not speak English very well. Use short words, active verbs, and common nouns.
3. **Be friendly.** Use contractions. Talk directly to the reader using second person ("you"). If your text doesn't read the way you'd say it in casual conversation, it's probably not the way you should write it. Don't be abrupt or annoying and make the user feel safe, happy and energized.
4. **Put the most important thing first.** The first two words (around 11 characters, including spaces) should include at least a taste of the most important information in the string. If they don't, start over.
5. **Describe only what's necessary, and no more.** Don't try to explain subtle differences. They will be lost on most users.
6. **Avoid repetition.** If a significant term gets repeated within a screen or block of text, find a way to use it just once.

Examples

1. **Keep it brief.** From the setup wizard:

Too formal

Consult the documentation that came with your phone for further instructions.

Better

Read the instructions that came with your phone.

2. **Keep it simple.** From the Location settings screen:

Confusing

Use GPS satellites

When locating, accurate to street level.

Better

GPS

Let apps use satellites to pinpoint your location.

3. **Be friendly.** Dialog that appears when an application crashes:

Confusing and annoying—"Sorry" just rubs salt in the wound.

Sorry!

Activity MyAppActivity (in application MyApp) is not responding.

Force close

Wait

Report

Shorter, more direct, no faux-apologetic title:

MyApp isn't responding.

Do you want to close it?

Wait

Report

Close

4. **Put the most important thing first.**

Top news last

77 other people +1'd this, including Larry Page.

Task last

Touch Next to complete setup using a Wi-Fi connection.

Top news first

Larry Page and 77 others +1'd this.

Task first

To finish setup using Wi-Fi, touch Next.

5. Describe only what's necessary, and no more.

From a Setup Wizard screen

Signing in...

Your phone needs to communicate with Google servers to sign in to your account. This may take up to five minutes.

From a Setup Wizard screen

Signing in...

Your phone is contacting Google. This can take up to 5 minutes.