This document will be used by anyone writing a documentation guide. The goal is to provide structure and guidelines so that our guides appear consistent regardless of who they’re written by.

**Voice/Tone:**

Someone reading technical content is usually looking to answer a specific question. That question might be broad or narrowly-focused, but either way our goal is to provide answers without distraction. We don’t want to overload a reader with unnecessary information, choices to make, or complex ideas or phrases, when we don’t have to. Keep sentences, paragraphs, and procedural steps focused, concise, and with very little humor.

Write your guides in second person as if you are speaking directly to the customer. Using you, your etc. It is very important to maintain consistency of second person throughout the document.

Use imperatives. They tell the reader what or how to do something. For example, “Read the following instructions”. This provides the reader clear, unambiguous instructions.

**Selecting Guides/Content**

The first thing you should always do before even beginning to write is first establish what needs to be written. Not all guides will be immediately accessible to the beginner user but we need to provide a path for that beginner user to follow if they want to learn a specific guide.

The process for this is a brainstorming activity. You will start by thinking of a very specific business use case guide and writing out a list of any knowledge necessary in order to accomplish the task. Then, group those bits of knowledge by Resources, which will form additional supplementary guides under the Resources section

The methodology for selecting a new set of guides is first selecting a specific business use case guide and determining which resource guides and content within those guides will need to be created in order to support it.

Any time a new business use case guide is selected, the resource guide content will need to be re-evaluated to ensure it is fully supported. This means adding content to existing resource guides if necessary.

**Layout Guidelines**

Always include an introduction and conclusion section. The introduction should prime readers on what they will be learning to allow them to quickly assess whether the guide is relevant to the problem they are solving. A conclusion will summarize main points and include a call to action.

Each section should include a heading along with a # that allows the reader to quickly link to that section.

Include visuals where possible and appropriate.

Links should to other articles should be included wherever possible.

**Formatting**

When showing code examples always use syntax highlighting. Blocks of code can be highlighted with prism while stand alone words in a paragraph should be wrapped in <code></code> tags.

Parameters for endpoint URIs should be wrapped in brackets.

Example:

* Yes: v1/buyers/{buyerID}/orders/{orderID}
* No: v1/buyers/newBuyerID/orders/newOrderI

When calling out a specific endpoint use the format:

*{Resource} → {Section} → {*[*Endpoint*](http://includelinktoendpoint)*}*. This mirrors the API reference well, allowing the user to see exactly where the endpoint is located and how it relates to our data model. A link on the Endpoint allows them to quickly view any additional parameter information.

Example:

* Yes: *Buyer → Address →* [*CreateNewAddress*](https://devcenter.ordercloud.io/docs/api#Addresses_Create)

Any Jargon or acronyms should be explained upon the first instance of use.

**Grammar:**

Use Oxford Commas.

Example**:**

* Yes: David admires his parents, Oprah, and Justin Timberlake.
* No: David admires his parents, Oprah and Justin Timberlake.

Don’t use quotes for emphasis. Instead **bold** or *italicize*.

Spell out numbers zero to nine or when the number is used at the beginning of the sentence. Otherwise, use the numeral.

Example:

* Thirteen new employees started on Monday, and 12 start next week.
* I ate three donuts at lunch.

Use contractions. They are more conversational and after all we are speaking to the reader (2nd person).

When referring generally to a file extension, use all uppercase without a period. Add a lowercase “s” to make it plural.

Example:

* GIF
* JPGs