





# Overview

Writing is fundamental to guiding the user toward completing a task. This style guide recommends minimum standards across software products, so an application’s text provides consistent digital experiences.

## About


This style guide is for anyone writing text for digital UI and UX. Because the  Design System focuses on software applications, so does its text guidance. The guidance is the result of collaboration with  software teams, research into other  style guides, and UX best practices.

## How to use this guide

This guide recommends general best practices for UX writing and common text needs for software teams at  while allowing for exceptions based on your project’s requirements. The recommended guidance **does not** replace guidance that is specific to your project.

## Voice and tone

Some products/projects need a more specific, or somewhat different, tone. Work with stakeholders to document that tone, considering:

- ’s global voice
- Product’s target audience/user
- Product’s purpose
- Empathy for the user
- Clarity

# Abbreviations

As the short form of a word, an abbreviation can help save space and improve scannability. When you use abbreviations, consider whether the abbreviations will help save the user’s time or confuse them.

## General usage

Use abbreviations appropriately to create concise, consistent content and clean designs, but uncommon abbreviations can create difficult understanding and translation.

- General usage
- Date and time abbreviations
- Latin abbreviations

### Use well-known abbreviations

Use well-known abbreviations, like “USB,” “Inc.,” “AM,” or “PM.”

✔ Do

Battery has 15 min remaining.

✗ Don't

Sign up for enterp. serv.

### Spell out first reference

Spell out the first reference of an unfamiliar abbreviation, then add the abbreviation in parentheses after the spelled-out reference.

✔ Do

The International Trade Commission (ITC) recommends these restrictions.

✗ Don't

Because of HIPAA, we need to request your signature.

## Date and time abbreviations

Date and time abbreviation formats should be readable and consistent. For more information about date formatting and abbreviation, [visit Numbers](#).

### AM and PM

Use “AM” and “PM” without periods, and add a space between the numeral and the abbreviation.

✔ Do

Update tonight at 11:42 PM.

✗ Don't

Your alarm for 5:45p.m. is set.

## Latin abbreviations

The meanings of Latin abbreviations may not always be clear to a general reader.

### Avoid Latin abbreviations

Avoid using Latin abbreviations. Don’t rely on “etc.” as a catch-all or “i.e.” to describe a concept that can be clearer to begin with.

✔ Do

for example  
in other words  
and so on

✗ Don't

e.g.  
i.e.  
etc.

# Capitalization

In digital content, sentence case is easier to read. Capitalize proper nouns and use title case whenever necessary, but avoid using capitalization for text emphasis.

## Proper nouns

A proper noun is the name of a specific person, organization, or thing.

### Capitalize proper nouns

Capitalize proper nouns wherever they appear.

- Proper nouns
- Sentence case
- Title case

✔ Do

Subscribe to  Instant Ink.


✗ Don't

Subscribe to  instant ink.

✔ Do

The  Laser Jet printer comes with 6 months of toner subscription.

✗ Don't

The  Laser Jet Printer comes with 6 months of toner subscription.


## Sentence case

In sentence case, only capitalize the first word of a sentence and any other proper nouns.

### Use sentence case for most text


Use sentence case for most text, including headings, buttons, and links.

✔ Do

Learn about 's tokens

Design tokens are the foundational elements of a design system.

✗ Don't

Learn How to Contribute to 's Icon Library

You can submit a detailed request for a new icon.

✔ Do

Start a new meeting


✗ Don't

START A NEW MEETING

✔ Do

Forma DJR UI is a [variable font](#).

✗ Don't

The shadow setting logic follows 's Grid and Spacing Rule.

## Title case

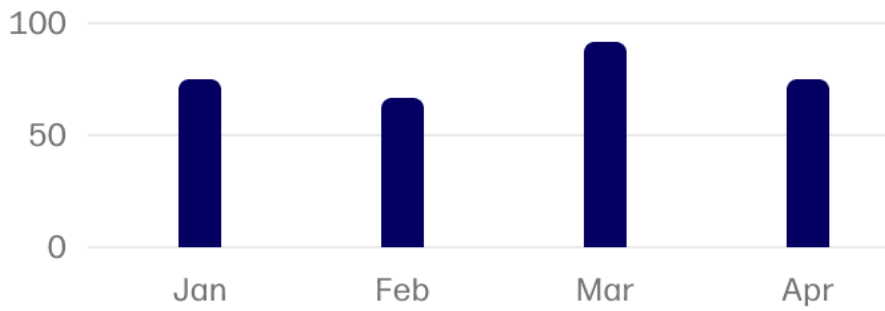
Title case means to capitalize the first word and every word after except for articles, prepositions 5 letters or fewer, and coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, yet, so).

### Use title case for tables and charts

Capitalize the titles and headings of tables and charts. The title of tables and charts and its headings are the proper name of the information and helps the text stand out from visuals.

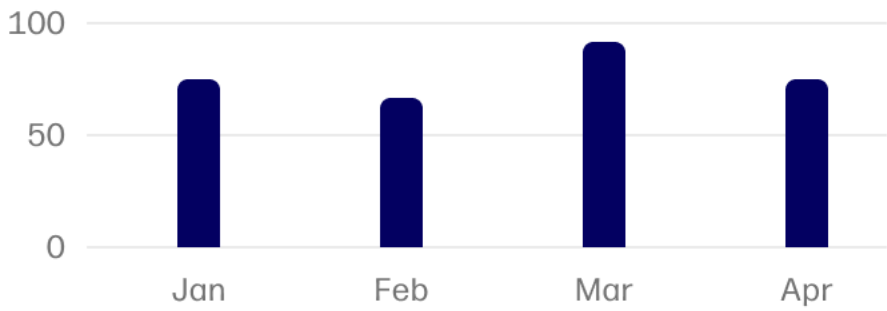
✔ Do

New Users Each Month



✗ Don't


New users each month





# Inclusion

Inclusion means that everyone can use and should feel comfortable using technology. Text in a user interface should reflect that.

  [s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) reviewed and approved this section as of July 27, 2023.

## Principles of inclusive writing

- Empathize with the people you write for.
- Write for real people who have real reactions to language, like tone, wording, implications, and the histories of words.
- Welcome all groups, identities, and abilities. In the end, we’re all people who need to accomplish a task.



**Writing for Web Accessibility**  
Review W3C’s resources for more guidance on inclusive writing.



**Diverse audiences, inclusive language**  
[Read more about !\[\]\(faf942dc3e59ce8eb64b4ac481eca7e0\_img.jpg\)’s writing guidance](#) on inclusive language.

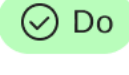
## Accessibility

Everyone uses technology differently. Language should reflect the reality that some people:

- Don’t use a keyboard, a mouse, or both
- Have limited vision or dexterity
- Have varying abilities or cognitions

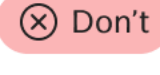
### Avoid describing locations on the screen

Avoid using words and phrases that describe a physical location on the screen (top, bottom, left, right, corner, above, below, following).



Do

Select **Settings**.



Don’t

At the top right, select **Settings**.



Do

Choose one:

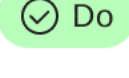


Don’t

Choose one of these options below:

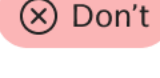
### Avoid describing components’ appearances

Refer to buttons, banners, or other components by what they say, not their visual appearances. For more information about button text emphasis, [view Bold](#).



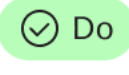
Do

Select **Next**.



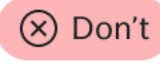
Don’t

Select the blue button.



Do

Open the notification center to read your messages.

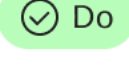


Don’t

Click on the red dot to open your messages.

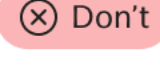
### Use platform-neutral actions

Use platform-neutral actions instead of actions that apply only to web views or only to mobile applications.



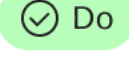
Do

Find  
Visit  
Learn about



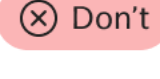
Don’t

See



Do

Select  
Choose  
Open

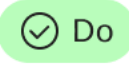


Don’t

Tap  
Click  
Double-click  
Double-tap

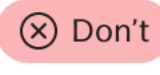
### Avoid using “right-click” to open shortcuts

Right-clicking often opens a contextual menu that provides a shortcut to an action. For accessibility purposes, provide the full instructions to complete an action. Everyone can use the full instructions, but not everyone can use the shortcut.



Do

To open the icon library, select **Library > Web > Icons**.



Don’t

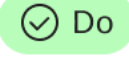
Right-click anywhere on your canvas and click **Icons** to open the icon library.

## Gender

To promote inclusion and diversity, avoid pronouns that reflect gender binary.

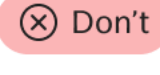
### Use gender-neutral pronouns

Use the singular “they” to refer to a person generally or to a person whose gender is unknown.



Do

View their profile.



Don’t

View his/her profile.

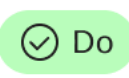
## Nationality and culture

Use accurate and respectful language when you describe nationalities and cultures. When you use examples, include names, holidays, and locations from around the world and from different cultures and experiences.

### Avoid implying the “otherness” of nationalities or cultures

Avoid using these words when referring to nationality and culture:

- Alien
- Exotic
- Foreign
- Strange
- Weird



Do

Connect with people around the world.

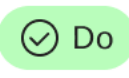


Don’t

Learn about the strange customs of other nations.

### Avoid using “America” to refer to the U.S.

Avoid the terms “America” and “Americans” when referring to the United States of America and the people living there. “America” is two continents and shouldn’t be conflated with just one country in them. Abbreviate “United States” with periods so it’s not confused with the word “us” in all caps.



Do


U.S. American(s)  
U.S. residents  
USA  
(including “A” clarifies the meaning, so omit periods if space is limited)



Don’t

Pay with the American dollar.  
Are you an American citizen?  
America and Brazil can trade goods.

## Race

 digital content rarely needs to talk about race, but it’s important to increase awareness of common terms to avoid. These terms carry a history of prejudice, unconscious bias, and stereotypes.

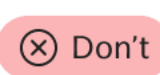
### Avoid words that imply “white” is positive and “black” is negative

Avoid words that refer to “black” as a negative state or outcome and “white” as a positive state or outcome



Do

deny list  
blocklist  
unethical hacker



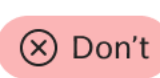
Don’t

blacklist  
black hat hacker



Do

permit list  
allowlist  
ethical hacker



Don’t

whitelist  
white hat hacker

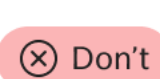
### Avoid words that imply light color is standard

Avoid words that imply beige/tan-ish/light color is standard



Do

Change the button to a tan color.



Don’t

Change the button’s color to skin tone.

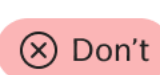
### Avoid words with racial discrimination origins

Avoid words and phrases that originate from the history of racial discrimination or slavery



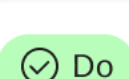
Do

legacy  
existing  
current  
rollover



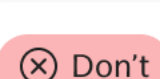
Don’t

grandfather(ed)



Do

main branch  
primary plan  
main list



Don’t

master branch  
master plan  
master list

#### [Principles of inclusive writing](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Gender](#)

[Nationality and culture](#)

[Race](#)



# Numbers

When you use numbers, make sure that the format is consistent. With digital content, consider which format is better for readability and scannability.

## Dates

The guidance in this section is for the date notation used in the U.S. If your content is localized, use the appropriate format and be consistent.

### Spell out the month or use three-letter abbreviations

Ideally, spell out the month or abbreviate, and include the numerical date and year. Include a comma after the date. If you abbreviate the month, use three-letter abbreviations. Do not use a period after the abbreviated month.

✔ Do

December 18, 2023

✗ Don't

18 December, 2023

✔ Do

Dec 18, 2023

✗ Don't

Dec. 18th, 2023

### Be consistent

Use only 1 date format consistently in your content.

✔ Do

Quarter	Created	Last change
Q1-22	Nov 21, 2022	Dec 23, 2022
Q3-19	Jun 2, 2019	Jul 4, 2019
Q2-23	Apr 18, 2023	May 2, 2023

✗ Don't

Quarter	Created	Last change
Q1-22	Nov 21, 2022	23 December 2022
Q3-19	Jun 02, 2019	04-20-2019
Q2-23	Apr 18, 2023	02 May 2023

### Be thoughtful with date localization

One date format may not be appropriate for every situation because of audience, space constraints, and localization. Be thoughtful about when you use a different format.

Canada

2023-12-18  
18 December 2023  
December 18, 2023

Australia

2023-12-18  
18/12/2023  
18 December 2023

## Currency

The guidance in this section is for the currency format used in the U.S. The currency format in digital content should ideally include currency code. If your content is in a different country or region, use the appropriate decimal and thousands separators.

📘 If your content is localized, you may only need to clarify the currency type and amount with a localizer. Most localized currency is dynamic and changes based on the user's language settings or location.

### Use numerical amount and three-letter currency code

If your content isn't localized, ideally, use the numerical amount and the three-letter currency code. Place the currency code at the end of the number with a space between the number and code.

📘 Use a comma to separate every three digits.

✔ Do

900 USD

✗ Don't

870aud

✔ Do

1,620 JPY

✗ Don't

£500000

## Numerals

Use numerals whenever possible to enhance scannability.

### Use numerals in body copy

Ideally, use numerals in body copy, even for numbers 0–9. This saves space and helps the user scan information faster.

✔ Do

Enter your 5-digit verification code.

✗ Don't

Follow these one hundred twenty-seven steps to set up your printer.

✔ Do

Choose 2 security questions.

✗ Don't

You connected five devices.

### Spell out numbers 0–9 in certain situations

For clarity, you may need to spell out numbers 0–9 in body copy.

#### Situation #1

Spell out numbers when they begin a sentence.

✔ Do

Eight days remain on your free trial.

✗ Don't

1 thing to avoid is inserting the cartridge upside down.

#### Situation #2

If two numbers that refer to different items appear together in a sentence, spell out the smaller number and use a numeral for the other. Use numerals if both numbers are larger than 20.

✔ Do

Enter three 11-character answers.

✔ Do

All 12 documents are two pages long.

✔ Do

Add 58 computers to 25 teams.

### Spell out “number”

Spell out the word “number” to avoid confusion with the word “no” and enhance readability.

✔ Do

Enter your phone number.

✗ Don't

Use a combination of no. and English letters for your password.

## Phone numbers

Phone numbers should follow a consistent format for each country or region and reflect the country code if your content is not localized.

### Follow each country/region format

Follow the typical format for each country or region. For example, if a phone number uses hyphens, only use hyphens to separate numbers.

✔ Do

555-555-5555

✗ Don't

555.555.5555  
(555) 555-5555

### Specify the country code if content is not localized

If your content isn't localized, specify the country calling code.

✔ Do

+1 555-555-5555

✗ Don't

555-555-5555



# Text emphasis

Text emphasis calls attention to information, but use it thoughtfully. If everything is emphasized, nothing is.

## Bold

Use bold to indicate UI text in instructions and occasionally emphasize information.

- Bold
- Italics
- Underline

### Bold UI text in instructions

In instructions, bold the text that the user interacts with in the UI, such as the text in a button. For more information about button text, view [Avoid describing components' appearances](#).

✔ Do

Choose **Save document**.

✗ Don't

In **Settings**, select **Data usage**.

✔ Do

In the app, select **Home**.

✗ Don't

In the **Self Service window**, switch to the **Home tab**, then select **Change your password**.

### Don't bold punctuation

When punctuation follows a bolded word, don't bold the punctuation. This includes colons, periods, and quotation marks.

✔ Do

- **Learn how to:**
  - Create an account
  - Enable 2-factor authentication
  - Link your account to other devices

✔ Do

Select **Done** > **Submit**.

## Italics

Digital content rarely needs to use italics.

### Avoid italics

Avoid whenever possible because they can reduce readability on screens.

✔ Do

 is 's software design system.

✗ Don't

 is 's *software design system*.

## Underline

In digital content, underline is usually associated with hyperlinks.

### Only underline hyperlinks

Except for hyperlinks, avoid underlining text. Some links only appear underlined when the user hovers over them.

✔ Do

Before you create a new icon, check for existing and in-progress icons in [Veneer's icon library](#).

✗ Don't

There are four important business rules that any enterprise must follow.