Writing Guidelines

for editorial, SEO, and UX.

IVISA

ivisa.com

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Overview

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Our editorial guidelines outline the common rules to follow and the voice to adopt when crafting copy under our brand.

Maintaining and demonstrating a consistent voice and message will boost brand awareness in increasingly noisy channels, helping us to continue to lead in our field.

The guidelines should be considered the go-to resource for teams tasked with creating public facing copy, from web copy through to customer stories, blog posts, and PRs.

For more information on our brand guidelines visit link to **Brand Book.**

This style guide will always be a work in progress, but we'll aim to update it about once

If something isn't included here, a good resource is **The Guardian Style Guide.** But please flag any omissions so we can look to add.

Our value proposition

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IVISA

We're a customer-first business, which means always putting ourselves in their shoes.

Whether we're writing in-depth guides, or teeny tiny microcopy. Always think about:

- What would they find useful and interesting?
- What are their pain points and frustrations?
- How can we make sure we're helping make their lives easier, and their travel plans hassle free?

We need to be transparent that we are NOT a government agency, but an intermediary that can help them with support to get the necessary paperwork they need for their travel plans.

As part of this service we charge a fee, but they will get certain services and support for that fee.

Who are our customers?

5 copywriting principles to live by

IVISA

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Wherever we show up, and in whichever direction we're leaning our tone of voice, there are a few principles we never waver from, regardless of the channel or audience.

B2C, but human-to-human

Talk like a person you'd want to talk to – someone who can articulate what they have to offer without bragging, lecturing, dropping a ton of buzzwords. Put extra emphasis on cutting out jargon and using more 'human' wording, especially since we use AI.

E.g. 'We'll need to collect your biometric data' vs 'You need to provide us your

Clever is great – as long as it's clear, too

While we are playful with language, we don't let it get in the way of clarity. In particular, our headlines should never take too long to unpack or interpret. Avoid references that only some people would get. Turn a phrase when it's smart, not when it's low-hanging fruit. And bear in mind many of our readers won't be native-English speakers, so puns are out.

Don't use extra words

We rarely have a captive audience. So break out your red pen and strike those unnecessary set-ups and redundant ideas. Replace long paragraphs with bulleted lists. Preserve white space in layouts and on web pages. Keep breathing room in scripts. Find jargon to cut.

Lead with the benefit for the customer

Identify the problems we can solve for customers before explaining how or making inflated marketing claims.

Think global

We have customers in every corner of the globe, so it's important to choose messaging, themes, and frameworks that are culturally inclusive, and universally inspiring.

Style guide

IVISA

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Common guidelines to follow include:

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Don't use
full points in abbreviations, or spaces between initials, including those in proper names. E.g. IMF, mph, 4am

Use
All capitals if an abbreviation is pronounced as the individual letters (an initialism): CEO, US, VAT, etc; if it is an acronym (pronounced as a word) spell out with initial capital, eg Nasa, Nato, Unicef, unless the organization itself writes it differently, or it can be considered to have entered the language as an everyday word, such as awol, laser and, more recently, pin number and sim card. Note that pdf and plc are lowercase.

If an abbreviation or acronym is to be used more than once in a piece, put it in brackets at first mention: so, seasonal affective disorder (Sad); alternatively, use the abbreviation with a brief description, e.g. the conservation charity the WWF.

If an organization is mentioned only once, it is not necessary to give its abbreviation or acronym.

Cap up single letters in such expressions as C-list, F-word, "the word assassin contains four Ss", etc

Among or while

Not amongst or whilst.

Common guidelines to follow include:

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A or an before H?

Use an before a silent H: an heir, an hour, an honest politician, an honorary consul; use a before an aspirated H: a hero, a hotel, a historian (but don't change a direct quote if the speaker says, for example, "an historic"). With abbreviations, be guided by pronunciation: eg an LSE student.

Ages

For ages, always use figures. If the age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it should be hyphenated. Don't use apostrophes when describing an age range.

Examples:

- ✅ A 21-year-old student.
- ✅ The student is 21 years old.
- ✅ *The girl, 8, has a brother, 11.*
- ✅ The contest is for 18-year-olds.
- ✅ He is in his 20s.

Bolded text

Bolded text is a great way to make key points for the customer stand out. Use bold on phrases or words that would be of interest to the reader – especially if it's a keyword or phrase they may have been searching for on Google.

Common guidelines to follow include:

Bullets and bold

Try to combine bullets with bolded text where possible.

- **Create each bullet as if it were a headline:** Bullets are like mini-headlines or sub-headlines. They should pack almost the same punch as any headline would.

- **Don't overdo it:** For any given topic or series of bullets, don't feel compelled to give the reader everything they need to know. Between 3-7 bullets are ideal

- **Don't repeat words:** The stem is the last word in the sentence introducing the list, right before the colon. E.g.

At iVisa, we offer a range of services, including:

- Passport renewals.
- Embassy visas.
- eVisas.

Think of each bullet point as an individual sentence when combined with the stem. So read the stem with each bullet point separately. Each one should look and sound consistent with respect to grammar and punctuation.

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Common guidelines to follow include:

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Bullets in lists

- Capitalize at the start of each point
- Don't add periods/full stops at the end of each point
- Use a colon to start the list and a capital letter following the colon
- Try to avoid semicolons, but if you need to make multiple points, consider breaking up the points into secondary bullets.
  - Like this

Can vs may

Use can instead of may, e.g:

✓ "How can we help you?"   ✓ "Find out how we can help you".

Can is less formal, and more friendly.

Commas

Use a comma when you're creating a pause in a sentence, (like this) and an en-dash when you'd want to connect 2 independent clauses – or when you'd typically use a semicolon.

The Oxford Comma should be used in lists of three and above to avoid confusion: *"We offer services such as passport renewal, eVisas, and EITAS."*

Common guidelines to follow include:

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Contractions

Always use don't, won't, can't etc.

Avoid less conventional contractions such as would've, couldn't've etc.

Dates, Months, Years, Days of the Week

Write as:
Month day, year e.g. August 27, 2019.

For dates and years, use figures:
Do not use st, nd, rd, or th with dates, and use Arabic figures.

Always capitalize months and days of the week. Spell out the month, unless it is used with a date. When used with a date, abbreviate only the following months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.

If you refer to an event that occurred the day prior to when the article will appear, do not use the word yesterday. Instead, use the day of the week. Capitalize days of the week, but do not abbreviate. If an event occurs more than seven days before or after the current date, use the month and a figure.

Common guidelines to follow include:

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Dos and don'ts. Not do's and don'ts

Ellipses: When using ellipses for intrigue, follow the ellipses with a space... (as here).

En dashes: Use when breaking up text with a space on either side – like so. Don't use en dashes (—) or hyphens (-).

Government: Lowercase unless it's a full title. For example: "United States Embassy", vs. "your nearest embassy"'local government', but 'United States Government'

Headlines

✓ **Use**	✗ **Not**
Sentence case, like this.	Title Case, Like This.

Hyphenate

Hyphenate words:

- When 2 words would be ambiguous, e.g. the French furniture salesman, the French-furniture salesman.
- When using words together as a modifier before a noun, e.g. best-practice guidelines
- After short and commonly used adverbs, e.g. well-, ill-, much-

Avoid hyphenation after adverbs ending in –ly, e.g. incredibly written content, awesomely immersive graphics.

Common guidelines to follow include:

Job titles

It's hard to resist capitalizing job titles, unless they are used in the act of naming someone, do not capitalize them.

E.g.

✓ Please allow me to introduce you to our **managing director**, Bob Smith.

✓ Today Julie had an interview with **Managing Director** Bob Smith.

No matter how important you deem the job a person does, resist the urge to capitalize their title if it does not name them.

E.g.

✓ The next time I visit Rome, I'm going to drop in on the pope.

✓ I can't wait to meet Pope Francis when I am in Rome.

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Common guidelines to follow include:

Name

Use

Always use a person's first and last name the first time they are mentioned in a story. Then use their first name after that to personalize them.

✅ *John Doe.*

Don't use

Courtesy titles such as *Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms.* unless they are part of a direct quotation or are needed to differentiate between people who have the same last name.

Company names are singular. When not writing the company name, refer to the company as it rather than they.

❌ *Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms.*

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Common guidelines to follow include:

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Numbers

For numbers, try to use figures as much as possible. This is because it's easier for the brain to quickly understand. Our goal as writers is to be as clear and concise as possible. *e.g. 3 not three.*

✅ **Use**	❌ **Not**
3	Three

For ordinal numbers, spell out *first* through *ninth* and use figures for *10th* and above when describing order in time or location.

E.g.

> ✅ *Second base, 10th in a row.*

Some ordinal numbers, such as those indicating political or geographic order, should use figures in all cases.

E.g.

> ✅ *3rd District Court, 9th ward.*

Common guidelines to follow include:

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Omnichannel

Write **omnichannel**, not omni channel or omni-channel.

Percentage

Write the symbol % when using numbers, not the word, percent. Unless referring to it in a sentence, i.e. *A high percentage of people think...*

E.g.

✓ We help **68%** of travelers get their...	✕ We help **68 percent** of travelers get their..

Punctuation

- Use a single space after a period.
- Avoid exclamation marks.
- Use a hyphen (-) to connect words: long-term vs longterm or long term.
- Multiple entry vs multiple-entry.
- Visa-exempt vs visa exempt.
- Etc.
- Commas and periods go within quotation marks. Example: *"I did nothing wrong," he said. She said, "Let's go to India on holiday."*

Common guidelines to follow include:

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References

(See Citations)

Times

The exact time when an event has occurred or will occur is unnecessary for most stories. Of course, there are occasions when the time of day is important. In such cases, use figures, but spell out 12:00 to lunch.

Use
a colon to separate hours from minutes.

But, do'nt use
do not use :00.

E.g.

✅ *1 p.m., 3:30 a.m.*   ❌ ***1:00** p.m.*

Titles

Generally, capitalize formal titles when they appear before a person's name, but lowercase titles if they are informal, appear without a person's name, follow a person's name or are set off before a name by commas.

Write this, not that: Common mistakes

Write this	Not that	¿Why?
ivisa.com	http://www.iVisa.com	When writing any URL, don't include *http://www.*
visa	Visa	We don't capitalize the word visa as it's a common noun, but when we're referring to it as one of our products, we capitalize it. E.g. 'Australia Tourist Visa'
Australia visa (or any other country's visa when it's not our product)	Australia Visa	We don't capitalize the word visa as it's a common noun, but when we're referring to it as one of our products, we capitalize it. E.g. 'Australia Tourist Visa'
eVisa	e-Visa	When referring to an electronic visa, we write eVisa. If we need to explain the type of visa or category, it's ok to write electronic visa/s. Avoid using this word at the start of a sentence.
ETIAS	Etias ETIAs	ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorisation System), making sure we always explain the long format the first time we mention it.

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Write this, not that: Common mistakes

Write this	Not that	¿Why?
Embassy Visa *If we're trying to differentiate between iVisa's visa offering	Guided visa	*When referring to the type of visa that needs an embassy/consulate/visa application center appointment, we should use Embassy Visa, and capitalize it as it's our product.* *We should try to make it easy for the customer to understand what this visa process implies (an appointment, a visit to an embassy, time that it takes to get it, etc).*
Passport Renewal	Passport renewal	We only capitalize "Passport Renewal" when we're referring to the service we offer, not when writing generally about passport renewals.
US passport (or any other passport)	US **P**assport	We don't capitalize "passport" on its own as it's not a product or a proper noun.
renewal kit	**R**enewal Kit	We don't capitalize "renewal kit" as it is just a part of the service we offer in passport renewals.

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Write this, not that: Common mistakes

Write this	Not that	¿Why?
processing speed	Processing **S**peed Processing time/ Time	*We don't capitalize processing speed, only use Processing speed if it's written on its own or at the beginning of a sentence. We don't refer to processing speed as processing time.*
Standard, Rush, Super-rush	standard rush Super-rush	When referring to iVisa's different processing speeds we capitalize them. But when we use them as an adjective rush-processing fee, we don't.
health declaration	Health **D**eclaration	We don't capitalize the term "health declaration" as it's a common noun, but when we're referring to it as one of our products, we capitalize it. E.g. 'Health Declaration".
embassy registration	**E**mbassy **R**egistration	We don't capitalize the term "embassy registration" as it's a common noun, but when we're referring to it as one of our products, we capitalize it. E.g. 'Australia Embassy Registration"
visa application center	Visa Application Center	*As it's a place and not something we offer, we don't capitalize this.*

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Write this, not that: Common mistakes

Write this	Not that	¿Why?
email	E-mail e-mail	Although both are correct, we use email as it's the way our customers typically write it (and is more modern).
applicant and application	**A**pplicant and **A**pplication	We don't cap up applicant or application unless it's at the start of a sentence
government fees	**G**overnment **F**ees	Lowercase unless it's the start of a sentence. E.g. Government fees.
credit card	creditcard or Credit Card	Lowercase unless it's the start of a sentence. E.g. Credit card required
$100 USD **$100 ARS**	US$100 US 100 100 $ 100 dollars 100 Dollars USD 100	Use the dollar symbol, but then specify which country's dollar we're referring to. E.g. United States is USD, Argentina is ARS

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5 tips for localizing assets

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Always write for your audience. At iVisa, our default is to write for a US audience. However there are instances where content is specifically designed and created for a different audience.

✅ **E.g.**
Obtain your French ETIAS for UK citizens.

In this instance you'd use UK spellings for a UK audience.

Content can be localized for different audiences as appropriate. Here are some tips to help you do this effectively...

5 tips for localizing assets

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TIP #1

Check spellings

Here are a few rules to help, but always double check to be sure your spelling isn't the exception that proves the rule:

- Verbs end in 'yze' in US English end in 'yse' in British English.
- Words that end in –re in the UK often have those two letters reversed when spelled in American English
- Words that end in 'ize' in US English usually end in 'ise' in UK English
- Words that end in 'or' in American English can often end in 'our' in UK English.
- Some nouns that end with 'ogue' in UK English end with either 'og' or 'ogue in American English.

5 tips for localizing assets

TIP #1

Check spellings

The most common culprits of misspelled American English/UK English:

US English spelling	UK English spelling
Organization	Organisation
Realize	Realise
Analyze	Analyse
Color	Colour
Personalize	Personalise
Favorite	Favourite
Apologize	Apologise
Center	Centre
Localization	Localisation
Traveling	Travelling
Behavior	Behaviour
License	Licence
Fulfill	Fulfil
Child care	Childcare

5 tips for localizing assets

TIP #2

Use plain language

This is important whether you're localizing or not, this is crucial to the success of your content. It also makes translating a lot easier.

TIP #3

Avoid colloquialisms and idioms that can only be understood in that region

This makes the job of translating or adapting a lot easier. Plus, bear in mind that even when writing in English, it may not be our customer's first language.

TIP #4

Be mindful of cultural/region-specific references

Examples that refer to things that are culturally specific will need to be adapted for localization, e.g. talking about lemonade stands -- which aren't really a thing outside the US.

TIP #5

Check that the products, brands, and organizations are well-known in that market

And make sure they have the same name and branding.

Copy
Checklist

IVISA

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✓ Before you start...

- Have you got a brief? You know why you're creating that content, who your audience is, and what your ultimate goal is.
- Are you writing a blog? Or a Country Visa Hub page? Here are all your copy decks and formats.
- There's a different piece of content for each audience, remember if you try to write for everyone, you write for no one.
- Every page has a purpose and a call to action.

✓ How user-friendly is your copy?

- There are clear signposts, such as subheadings, that tell the user where to go.
- Front load your sentences and paragraphs with the most interesting/useful info.
- Link text describes the destination page clearly. There are no unhelpful instructions like.
- 'Click here' or 'Read more'.
- Each page links to sensible suggestions for where the user might want to go next.

✓ How scannable is your copy?

- Pages are not slabs of text. There are plenty of subheadings, boxouts, bullets, bold
- text and images.
- Sentences are short (<12 words). Paragraphs are short (<1-3 sentences)
- It's easy to scan for the time poor reader – there's a clear H1 title, H2 standfirst and subheadings throughout.
- Similar pages have a consistent structure – the same information is in the same place.

✓ Are you using plain language?

- We write for our audience. Our writing is focused on the reader – their needs and wants, NOT iVisa's needs and wants.
- We write as iVisa in the first person, e.g. "We are..." not "iVisa has…"
- You prefer the active voice to the passive.
- Words are short and simple. You avoid jargon and spell out abbreviations.
- Use mainly positive constructions, e.g. "you're right" as opposed to "you're not wrong".
- Use personal pronouns ('we' and 'you') as much as possible – NEVER refer to iVisa in the third person or to the reader as 'users', 'customers', 'HR leaders', 'CX professionals' etc.

✓ Is it optimized for SEO?

- You use the keyword in the title tag, headline, subheads, and body copy of the page.
- You provide relevant, engaging content that people use and link to
- When you link to a page, you use the keyword for that page in the link text.

✓ Give it a final check

- Everything is up-to-date and logically ordered.
- No spelling, grammar, or formatting errors.
- There are no superlatives or OTT marketing claims.
- Your word choices, spellings, and formatting are consistent with the Style Guide and the market you're writing for.
- All your links work and go to the right place.
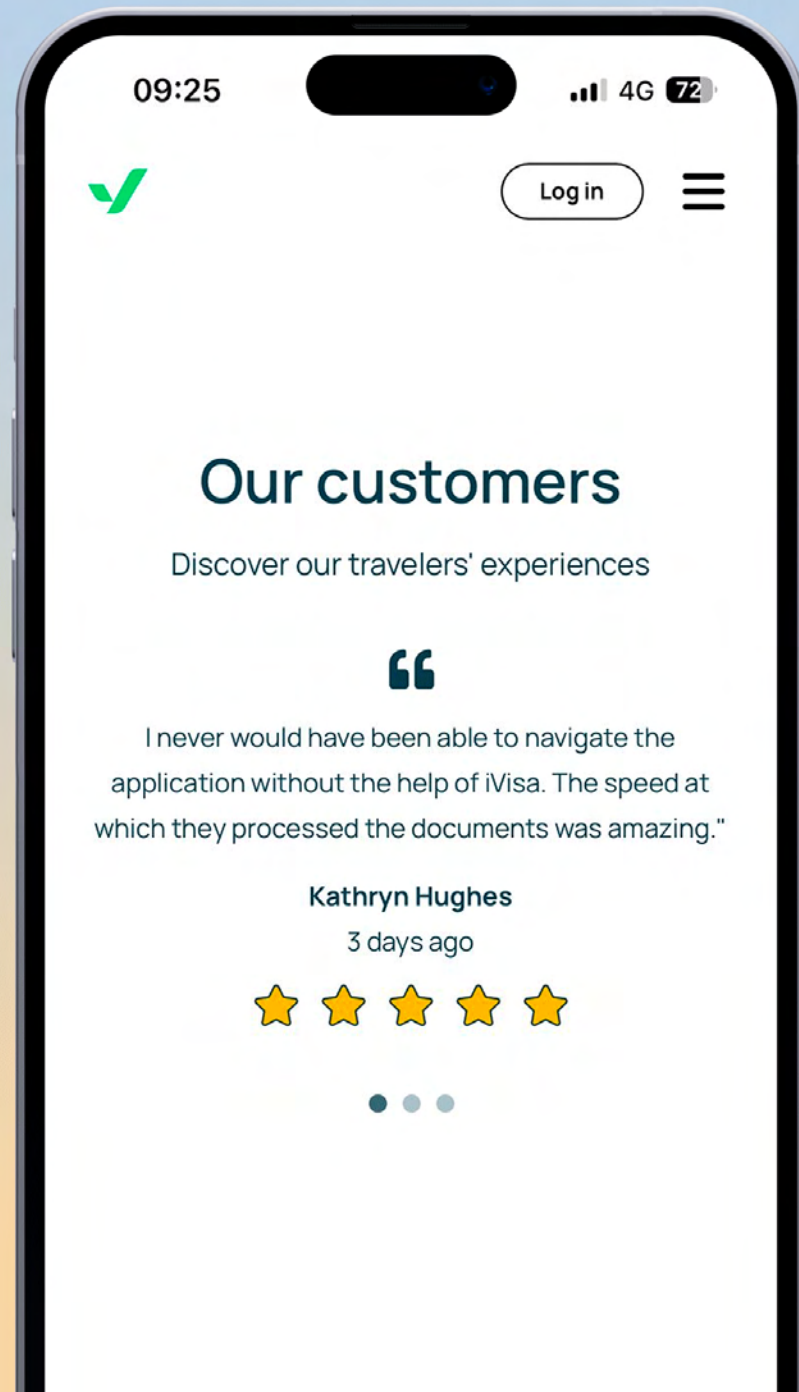
When do we byline?

07

IVISA

When do we byline?

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Content type	What is it?	Example	Byline?
Hub	Evergreen hygiene content that provides visa information	• Country-to-country articles • Country hub articles • Learn Mores • Blog optimisations	❌
Blog	Editorial and thought leadership content that provides a newsworthy or expert take on a particular topic of interest	• Been There, Done That • Project Kosmos • Interviews • World Explorers	✅

Who do we byline?

We try where possible to put our subject matter experts (SME) names on any thought leadership — this is a key part of demonstrating our expertise to the market. Take a look at these specific examples.

For editorial content — e.g. news updates, reporting from an event etc.— we try to byline articles to our internal experts.

Pull quotes: When and how to use them

IVISA

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WHEN AND HOW TO USE THEM

You can add these to Markdown by writing " › "

✅ **E.g.**
>iVisa made the impossible possible.

Pull quotes can be used in different ways:

1. To tease out an important or useful direct quote or passage from an article to make it stand out to the reader and give them context if they're scanning the page

2. They can also be good signposts for your reader – it draws the reader's attention in and can make them want to read more about that section

Pull quotes

Where to place your pull quotes?

If the article is written by the person the pull quote is from, there's no need to attribute it. However, if the attribution isn't clear, or there are lots of people name checked in the article, then write their name and job title after the quote like this:

Where to place your pull quotes?

Because pull quotes invite the reader to read about the highlighted material, the pull quote should appear before the text it cites and, generally, fairly close to it.

Pull quotes don't have to be taken directly from a quote, they can be used to simply highlight what that section of the article is about.

When to use pull quotes

Use them to break up slabs of text in articles or interviews to draw the reader further into the story. Use at least two pull quotes in an interview piece, where appropriate in other articles.

How long should pull quotes be?

Keep them short. Ideally one sentence. Consider how your pull quote will look on the page and think through the customer experience. A paragraph is going to be far too large to scan read on a webpage – even more so on mobile.

Keep in mind that our audience is mobile-first.

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Pull quotes: Examples

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✅ Good pull quote examples

❌ Bad pull quote examples

Emojis

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When and how to use them ✈️
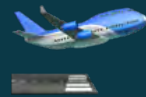
✓ In blogs and articles we avoid using emojis as part of our copy unless there's a specific reason to use them.

✓ N.B. Be aware of double meaning or meaning by country, not every country gives the same meaning to certain emojis.

✓ To optimize for accessibility, use emoji sparingly and place it at the end of the sentence rather than before or in the middle of the sentence.

✓ Do not use emoji as a replacement for a word, for example write out "Your flight was delayed," and not " Your 🛫 was delayed.

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