

Style Guide English, Canada (en-CA)

Onetime Secret - Translation style guide

This style guide provides instruction for translating to the Canadian English locale.

Version: 2025-02-01

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Target Audience

Our English-speaking audience consists of customers and recipients:

Customers

- Professional background: IT professionals, agency teams (design, development, marketing), and corporate support teams (HR, provisioning, logistics, finance)
- Demographics: Ages 20-50, technology-savvy, white-collar workers
- Location: North America, UK, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, Netherlands, Germany
- Writing approach: Use professional but straightforward language at a 10th-grade reading level

Recipients

- Demographics: Ages 20-70, including students, seniors, parents, clients, and trades workers
- Writing approach: Use simple, clear language at a 5th-grade reading level with an empathetic tone

Brand Voice

Core Values

- Authentic and transparent
- Patient and focused
- Efficient without sacrificing quality
- Professional yet approachable

Communication Principles

- Adapt tone to match user expertise, from beginners to security professionals
- Balance friendliness with reliability
- Prioritize clarity over casual language
- Provide delightful experiences through thoughtful interactions

Writing Guidelines

1. Use clear, direct language that respects users' time
2. Maintain a helpful, patient tone even when explaining complex concepts
3. Write with warmth while keeping focus on the task
4. Scale technical detail based on user context
5. Casual language should not be used at the expense of clarity, regardless of the context.

Language preferences

This involves determining language-specific preferences, such as spelling variations, punctuation rules, and date and time formats, which resonate with your target demographic. — Remember, adhering closely to your audience's language preferences can significantly reduce barriers to communication and enhance their experience with your brand.

- Use American English. However for date formats use yyyy-mm-dd and times use 24h. Distances in km, weights in lbs.
- Translations should sound as natural as possible. Borrowed words should never be used (with the exception of branded names).
- Our english speaking audience is 50% english as a first language and 50% as a second/third/professional language. We need to keep this in mind when choosing terms and phrases to avoid inappropriate or confusing translations.
- The word “secret“ is central to our brand, product, and communication strategy. We protect secrets. We also provide a secret service.

Translating the word "secret"

The word secret can take a number of meanings with subtle but important differences. Our canonical example comes from an update to our Danish translation by [jetdk](#):

Word Choice: "Beskeder" vs "Hemmeligheder"

CORRECT: **Beskeder** (messages)

INCORRECT: Hemmeligheder (secrets)

The term "Beskeder" should be used when referring to a secret (e.g. a secret message or secret link that is generated by Onetime Secret). While "Hemmeligheder" is a literal translation of "Secrets", it carries connotations of personal or hidden information in everyday Danish usage that don't match the intended meaning.

Example usage:

✅ Du har 3 nye beskeder (You have 3 new messages)

❌ Du har 3 nye hemmeligheder (You have 3 new secrets)

Grammar and style guidelines

Pinpoint rules for grammar, style, and punctuation to maintain consistency throughout all your translated content.

- Use oxford commas, periods, and question marks. Avoid exclamations, contractions, and semi-colons.
- Use active, imperative voice where users take action. Use passive or declarative voice when informing users.
- Sentence fragments are ok on their own. Otherwise full sentences with proper business grammar.
- Divide lengthy information into multiple sentences, if needed.
- In general, use the second person (**you**) to address the user.
- Avoid using the first person (**my** , **I**) as it can create confusion about who is being addressed.

UI Text: When to Use Active vs Passive Voice

Active, Imperative Voice ("Do something")

Buttons

- ✓ Save changes
- ✓ Delete file
- ✓ Send message

Menu items

- ✓ View settings
- ✓ Create new folder

Passive or Declarative Voice ("Something happened")

Status messages

- ✓ Changes saved
- ✓ File deleted
- ✓ Payment declined

Notifications

- ✓ 3 new messages
- ✓ Download complete
- ✓ Server unavailable

System states

- ✓ Upload in progress
- ✓ Connection lost
- ✓ Email address not found

Examples in Context

Form submission

- ✓ Save changes (button->active)
- ✓ Changes saved successfully (status->passive)

File upload

- ✓ Upload file (button)
- ✓ Upload complete (status)

Terminology consistency

Create a glossary of key terms, along with their approved translations, to ensure consistent usage across all content.

Brand Terms (Do Not Translate)

- Onetime Secret
- OTS (when used as product abbreviation)
- Identity Plus (product name)
- Global Elite (product name)
- Custom Install (product name)

About the Brand Name

In "Onetime Secret", "Onetime" functions as a compound adjective (also called a attributive adjective) that modifies the noun "Secret". It describes a key characteristic of the secret - that

it can only be accessed once. Note the spelling choice. There are actually three common variants of this term:

- "one-time" (hyphenated)
- "one time" (two words)
- "onetime" (compound)

The hyphenated form "one-time" is considered the standard spelling when the term functions as an adjective before a noun, as in "one-time password" or "one-time code". This follows the general English rule that compound modifiers before nouns are often hyphenated.

The compound form is the canonical spelling for the brand and company name: Onetime Secret.

Core Concepts

Secret Management

- **secret** (n.) - The confidential information being shared
 - Translations must maintain the context of confidentiality
 - Preferred over terms like "message" or "content"
 - Example: "Create a new secret" not "Create a new message"
- **one-time** (adj.) - Describing the single-use nature of the service
 - Must emphasize the temporary, single-use aspect
 - Hyphenated when used as adjective
 - Example: "This is a one-time secret" not "This is a single secret"
- **Onetime** (compound adj.) - Part of the brand name Onetime Secret.
 - Must not be used on its own; always paired with "Secret"
 - Example: "Onetime Secret"
- **burn** (v.) - The act of destroying a secret before it's viewed
 - Technical term for destruction of a secret message
 - Translations should maintain the permanence implied
 - Example: "The secret was burned and no longer available"

Security Terms

- **encryption** (n.) - The process of encoding secrets
 - Technical term that should remain consistent
 - Distinguish from "encoding" or "hashing"
 - Example: "All secrets use end-to-end encryption"
- **rate limiting** (n.) - System to prevent abuse
 - Technical term for request restriction
 - Keep hyphenation in English
 - Example: "Rate limiting prevents abuse"
- **secure**
- **private**
- **password / passphrase**
- **expiration / expiry / time-to-live**

User Management

- **colonel** (n.) - Administrator role
 - Project-specific term, rhymes with "kernel" which is a technical term and central component of an operating system. No other project uses this term in this way. It can be confusing even in North America.
 - Translate to the common term for an "administrator" in the context of software permissions. The account with the highest level of privileges.
 - Example: "Only colonels can access this feature" (i.e. "Only admins can access this feature").
- **plan** (n.) - Subscription level
 - Use consistently for service tiers
 - Prefer over "tier" or "level"
 - Example: "Upgrade to a premium plan"

Formatting and layout

Set standards for formatting, layout, and typography to maintain visual and design consistency across different languages.

- Use consistent header styles to improve readability and content flow. For example H1 for main headings, H2, H3, etc for sub-headings
- Write headings in sentence case unless the heading is a punctuated sentence:
 - Good example: How localization drives growth for fintech firms
 - Good example: Localization made easy. Why wait?
 - Bad example: How Localization Drives Growth for Fintech Firms
 - Bad example: Localization made easy. why wait?

Time format

Generally, a 12-hour clock is used in the United States. 24-hour clocks are used in aviation and other logistical contexts.

Numerals

Symbol Purpose	Character Name	Symbol	Example
Decimal	Period	.	1.23
Thousands	Comma	,	1,234
Percentage	Percent sign	%	99.95%

Currency

The currency of the Canada is the Canadian Dollar (CAD). The monetary symbols are \$ and rarely ¢.

Units of measurement

The imperial system is used for everyday weights in Canada. Everything else including distances, quantities, are in metric. Primarily m, Km, cm, mm ("deci" is used rarely).

Address and postal code format

[addressee]
[street number and name][building and suite numbers]
[district][city][state/province][postal code]
[Country]

British Columbia Sugar Refinery Ltd.
123 Rogers Street
Vancouver, BC. V6A 3N2
CANADA

Clear, Respectful Communication

Our goal: We want our writing to connect effectively with all readers while being clear, accurate, and respectful.

To verify your writing achieves these goals, ask:

- Is my language clear and specific?
- Am I addressing my readers directly and respectfully?
- Have I avoided assumptions about my readers?

Translation style

- Use literal translation for legal or technical texts
- Translate with cultural context when translating content for marketing or advertising
- Use transcreation where you adapt the message so it resonates culturally and emotively with the audience, for creative content including blog posts and marketing copy.