TechFlow Solutions

Content Style Guide & Writing Standards

📋 *Style Guidelines Overview*

This style guide ensures consistency across all TechFlow Solutions content, from technical documentation to marketing materials. Follow these guidelines to maintain our professional, approachable, and authoritative brand voice.

✍️ *Writing Mechanics*

Grammar & Punctuation

Oxford Comma:

- ***Always use** the Oxford comma in lists*
- ✅ *"We specialize in cloud migration, AI implementation, and process automation."*
- ❌ *"We specialize in cloud migration, AI implementation and process automation."*

Apostrophes:

- *Use straight apostrophes (') not curly ones (')*
- ***Contractions**: Use sparingly in formal content, freely in conversational content*
- ***Possessives**: Follow standard rules (client's needs, clients' requirements)*

Quotation Marks:

- *Use straight quotes (") not curly quotes (" ")*
- ***Client quotes**: Always use exact wording with proper attribution*
- ***Technical terms**: Use quotes for first mention if potentially unfamiliar*

Hyphens & Dashes:

- ***Hyphens (-)**: Compound modifiers (real-time data, cloud-based solution)*
- ***Em dashes (—)**: Parenthetical statements—like this example—or interruptions*
- ***En dashes (–)**: Date ranges (2019–2024), number ranges (15–20 employees)*

Capitalization Rules

Title Case (Headlines, Headers):

- *Capitalize: First word, last word, all major words*
- *Don't capitalize: Articles (a, an, the), prepositions under 4 letters, conjunctions*
- ***Example**: "How to Implement AI in Your Manufacturing Process"*

Sentence Case (Subheadings, Captions):

- *Capitalize only the first word and proper nouns*
- ***Example**: "Key benefits of cloud migration for small businesses"*

Proper Nouns & Brand Names:

- *Always match official capitalization*
- ***Correct**: Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services (AWS), TechFlow Solutions*
- ***Incorrect**: microsoft azure, Amazon web services, Techflow solutions*

Numbers & Measurements

***Numbers 1-9:** Spell out in body text (three benefits, five steps)* ***Numbers 10+:** Use numerals (15 employees, 42% improvement)*

Exceptions (always use numerals):

- *Percentages: 3%, 95% (with % symbol, no space)*
- *Currency: $3, $1,500, $2.3 million*
- *Technical specifications: 5 GB, 10 users, 3-year contract*
- *Ages: 5-year-old company, 25-year industry veteran*
- *Time: 3 hours, 30 minutes, 24/7 support*

Large Numbers:

- ***Thousands**: 1,500 or 1.5K (informal contexts)*
- ***Millions**: 2.3 million or $2.3M*
- ***Billions**: 1.2 billion or $1.2B*

📝 *Content Structure*

Paragraph Guidelines

Length: *2-4 sentences maximum for web content, 3-5 for formal documents* ***Structure***: *Topic sentence + supporting details + transition or conclusion* ***Flow***: *Use transitional phrases to connect ideas between paragraphs*

Example of Good Paragraph:

> *Cloud migration offers significant advantages for growing businesses. Our clients typically see 40% cost reduction in IT infrastructure within the first year. Additionally, cloud platforms provide the scalability needed to support rapid business growth. These benefits make migration a strategic priority for forward-thinking organizations.*

Heading Hierarchy

H1: *Page title or main document title* ***H2***: *Major sections (Overview, Benefits, Implementation)* ***H3***: *Subsections within major sections* ***H4***: *Specific topics within subsections* ***H5-H6***: *Use sparingly, mainly for technical documentation*

Heading Style Examples:

- ***H1***: *Digital Transformation Strategy Guide*
- ***H2***: *Cloud Migration Planning*
- ***H3***: *Infrastructure Assessment*
- ***H4***: *Current State Analysis*

List Formatting

Bulleted Lists:

- *Use for unordered items or benefits*
- *Start each item with capital letter*
- *Use parallel structure (all verbs, all nouns, etc.)*
- *No end punctuation unless items are complete sentences*

Numbered Lists:

1. *Use for sequential steps or prioritized items*
2. *Start each item with capital letter*
3. *Use parallel structure throughout*
4. *No end punctuation unless complete sentences*

Example of Parallel Structure: ✅ *Good:*

- *Reduce operational costs*
- *Improve efficiency*
- *Enhance security*

- *Increase scalability*

❌ *Poor:*

- *Reduce operational costs*
- *Efficiency improvements*
- *Security is enhanced*
- *You get better scalability*

🎯 Voice & Tone Guidelines

Tone by Content Type

Marketing Materials: *Confident, inspiring, benefit-focused*

- *"Transform your business operations with intelligent automation"*
- *Use active voice and strong action verbs*
- *Focus on outcomes and results*

Technical Documentation: *Clear, precise, educational*

- *"Configure the API endpoint by following these steps"*
- *Use imperative mood for instructions*
- *Define technical terms when first introduced*

Client Communications: *Collaborative, supportive, professional*

- *"Based on our discussion, here are the recommended next steps"*
- *Use inclusive language (we, us, our)*
- *Acknowledge client expertise and input*

Blog Posts: *Informative, thought-provoking, conversational*

- *"Many businesses struggle with this common challenge"*
- *Use rhetorical questions to engage readers*
- *Include real-world examples and scenarios*

Word Choice Guidelines

Preferred Terms:

- *Client (not customer for B2B contexts)*
- *Solution (when specific, avoid overuse)*

- *Implementation (not deployment for business audiences)*
- *Partnership (not vendor relationship)*
- *Challenges (not problems when appropriate)*
- *Optimize (not just improve)*
- *Strategic (when genuinely strategic)*

Avoid These Terms:

- *Leverage (overused, use "use" or "utilize")*
- *Synergy (vague, be specific about benefits)*
- *Game-changer (hyperbolic, use specific benefits)*
- *Best-in-class (subjective, use specific comparisons)*
- *Cutting-edge (overused, say "latest" or "advanced")*

Industry Jargon Guidelines:

- **First mention**: *Define or explain technical terms*
- **Subsequent mentions**: *Use the term directly*
- **Audience consideration**: *Adjust complexity based on reader expertise*
- **Alternatives**: *Provide simpler terms when possible*

📊 *Formatting Standards*

Typography

Fonts:

- **Headers**: *Use consistent heading styles*
- **Body text**: *Standard paragraph formatting*
- **Code**: *Monospace font for technical examples*
- **Emphasis**: *Bold for importance, italics for emphasis*

Emphasis Guidelines:

- **Bold**: *Key terms, important concepts, action items*
- **Italics**: *Book titles, foreign phrases, subtle emphasis*
- **CAPS**: *Avoid except for acronyms (API, CRM, AI)*
- **Underline**: *Avoid in digital content (suggests links)*

Links & References

Link Text:

- *Use descriptive text, not "click here" or "read more"*
- *✅ "Download the implementation checklist"*
- *❌ "Click here for the checklist"*

External Links:

- *Open in new tab for external sites*
- *Mention when linking to external resources*
- *"Learn more about AWS services (external link)"*

Internal References:

- *Use consistent naming for internal documents*
- *"See our Cloud Migration Guide for detailed steps"*
- *Include page numbers for print documents*

Tables & Data Presentation

Table Headers:

- *Use title case for column headers*
- *Keep headers concise but descriptive*
- *Use sorting when helpful for readers*

Data Formatting:

- *Align numbers to the right*
- *Use consistent decimal places*
- *Include units of measurement*
- *Highlight key data points*

Example Table:

Service Type	Implementation Time	Cost Savings
Cloud Migration	3-6 months	40%
Process Automation	2-4 months	35%

AI Implementation   6-12 months   50%

🔤 *Specific Style Rules*

Acronyms & Abbreviations

First Use: Spell out with acronym in parentheses

- *"Artificial Intelligence (AI) implementation requires careful planning"*
- *"Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems vary widely"*

Subsequent Use: Use acronym alone

- *"AI technologies continue to evolve rapidly"*
- *"CRM integration typically takes 2-3 weeks"*

Common Tech Acronyms (spell out first time):

- *API (Application Programming Interface)*
- *CRM (Customer Relationship Management)*
- *ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning)*
- *SaaS (Software as a Service)*
- *ROI (Return on Investment)*
- *UI/UX (User Interface/User Experience)*

Dates & Time

Date Format: Month DD, YYYY

- *✅ January 15, 2024*
- *❌ 15 January 2024 or 1/15/2024*

Time Format: Use 12-hour format with AM/PM

- *✅ 2:30 PM EST*
- *❌ 14:30 EST*

Time Zones: Always specify for meetings and deadlines

- *Include primary time zone: "3:00 PM EST (12:00 PM PST)"*

Contact Information

Phone Numbers: (XXX) XXX-XXXX format **Email**: Use lowercase, include proper domain **Addresses**: Follow postal service standards for formatting

File Naming Conventions

Documents: Use descriptive names with version numbers

- *TechFlow_Brand_Guidelines_v2.1.pdf*
- *Client_Proposal_ABCCorp_2024-01-15.docx*

Images: Include descriptive keywords

- *techflow_team_photo_2024.jpg*
- *cloud_migration_diagram_manufacturing.png*

🎨 Visual Content Guidelines

Image Usage

Screenshots: Include clear borders and callouts when necessary **Diagrams**: Use consistent colors and fonts matching brand **Photos**: Professional quality, relevant to content context **Charts**: Include data sources and clear legends

Captions & Alt Text

Image Captions: Use sentence case, describe what's shown

- *"TechFlow team collaborating on client implementation strategy"*

Alt Text: Descriptive for accessibility, 125 characters or less

- *"Business executives reviewing digital transformation roadmap on laptop screen"*

Brand Consistency

Colors: Use approved brand colors in all visual elements **Logos**: Follow brand guidelines for logo placement and sizing **Typography**: Maintain consistent font choices across materials

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✅ *Quality Checklist*

Before Publishing

Content Review:

- *[ ] Spell check completed*
- *[ ] Grammar check completed*
- *[ ] Brand voice consistent throughout*
- *[ ] Technical accuracy verified*
- *[ ] All links tested and working*

Style Compliance:

- *[ ] Heading hierarchy follows guidelines*
- *[ ] Numbers formatted consistently*
- *[ ] Acronyms defined on first use*
- *[ ] Tone appropriate for audience*
- *[ ] Word choice follows preferred terms*

Brand Alignment:

- *[ ] Key messages reinforced*
- *[ ] Value propositions clear*
- *[ ] Client focus maintained*
- *[ ] Professional tone throughout*
- *[ ] Call-to-action included where appropriate*

Common Errors to Avoid

Writing Mistakes:

- *Inconsistent tense throughout document*
- *Passive voice overuse*
- *Run-on sentences or too many short sentences*
- *Missing transitions between paragraphs*
- *Vague or generic statements*

Style Mistakes:

- *Inconsistent capitalization*
- *Missing Oxford commas*
- *Incorrect number formatting*
- *Overuse of exclamation points*
- *Inconsistent acronym usage*

Brand Mistakes:

- *Focusing on features instead of benefits*
- *Using competitor terminology*
- *Inconsistent company name usage*
- *Missing value proposition*
- *Too technical for intended audience*

📞 *Style Guide Contacts*

Questions about grammar/mechanics*: content@techflowsolutions.com **Brand voice clarification***: marketing@techflowsolutions.com ***Technical accuracy****: technical-writing@techflowsolutions.com **Client-specific guidelines***: client-success@techflowsolutions.com

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This style guide is updated quarterly. Last revision: January 2024. For the most current version, visit our internal knowledge base or contact the marketing team.