

IBM Watson

Building Conversational Solutions

Writing

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Remember ...

Writing conversational responses may not be your job or your forte, but the Tone and personality of your solution will have an impact on how successful it is

Key factors to consider

- **Accuracy** – Accuracy of answers is your number 1 priority
- **Positioning** – Think about how to reflect the **purpose**, **viewpoint**, and **proactivity** in the writing
- **Tone and personality** – Think about how to reflect the Tone and personality in the writing
- **Consistency with other content sources** – If your solution uses content from other sources (e.g. website, manuals) think about how you will bridge gaps in tone and personality
- **Types of informational responses** – *More on this later ...*
- **Types of conversational responses** – *More on this later ...*

AND ...

The Four Golden Rules ...

Golden Rule # 1

NEVER use “Yes” or “No” in a response

Q: Can I apply for a credit card online?

Good

A: To apply online, complete our credit card application

It takes 10-15 minutes to complete and we'll give you a response within 60 seconds

You'll need some information to complete the application [FIND OUT MORE](#)

Avoid

A: Yes you can!

Golden Rule # 2

ALWAYS reflect the question in the answer

Q: Can I apply for a credit card online?

Good

*A: **To apply online**, complete our **credit card application***

It takes 10-15 minutes to complete and we'll give you a response within 60 seconds

You'll need some information to complete the application [FIND OUT MORE](#)

Avoid

A: Yes you can!

Golden Rule # 3

Be as helpful as possible ...

Q: Can I apply for a credit card online?

Good

A: To apply online, complete our credit card application

*It takes 10-15 minutes to complete
and we'll give you a response within
60 seconds*

*You'll need some information to
complete the application [FIND OUT MORE](#)*

Avoid

A: Yes you can!

Golden Rule # 4

But don't make the response too long ...

Q: Can I apply for a credit card online?

Good

A: To apply online, complete our credit card application

It takes 10-15 minutes to complete and we'll give you a response within 60 seconds

You'll need some information to complete the application [FIND OUT MORE](#)

Avoid

A: To apply online, complete our credit card application.

It takes 10-15 minutes to complete and we'll give you a response within 60 seconds. After that we'll send you a letter in the mail to confirm the outcome.

You'll need the following information to complete the application:

- Details of your income*
- Details of your monthly expenses*
- Details of your assets and liabilities including all other credit cards*
- Indication of the credit limit you're after. Note that we'll assess your application and determine the appropriate credit limit ...*

Types of informational responses

Informational responses can be **Substantive** or **Deflecting**

Q: Tell me about your Platinum credit card

Substantive

A: Our platinum credit card has a great range of features, including

- Higher credit limit – up to \$20,000*
- Platinum Rewards – be rewarded for each dollar you spend*
- Complimentary insurances – we look after you when you travel*
- Secondary cardholder – at no extra charge*
- FIND OUT MORE ...*

Deflecting

A: Visit our credit card comparison page to learn more about the Platinum Credit card

Types of conversational responses

- There's a range of standard conversational responses and statements – sometimes called system statements – which your solution will use in specific circumstances
 - Welcome statements
 - Interleaving statements
 - Topping and tailing statements
 - Return statements
 - Did Not Know statements

Types of conversational responses

- **Welcome statements** – “Hi, I’m Sam, ABC bank’s virtual assistant ...”
 - Greet the user when they first launch the chat, and
 - Set the tone for the conversation
 - *Don’t make the Welcome statement super-chatty if the rest of the solution isn’t*

Tips

- Consider using “Welcome back” if we know the user is returning
- Consider using time of day in the Welcome statement
- Include information about the role of the solution – *virtual assistant, here to answer questions about ...*
- Does the solution have a name? If so, use it in the welcome statement

Types of conversational responses

- **Interleaving statements** – “Got another question? Just ask me!”
 - Follow final answers given by the solution – *don't appear in the middle of a process flow*
 - Encourages the user to ask another question

Tips

- Have a range of different statements so that the same statements don't keep reappearing
- Consider how frequently you present interleaving statements – *after every answer **may** get annoying*
- Consider using interleaving statements to give helpful information and tips – *“Did you know ...”*

Types of conversational responses

- **Topping and tailing statements – “Here’s some information I found ...”**
 - Shown before (topping) and/or after (tailing) informational answers
 - Can be used to
 - Indicate level of confidence in the answer
 - Differentiate between utterances from the conversational part of the solution (the virtual assistant) and the content from other sources (e.g. website, manuals)
 - Ask the user whether the answer was useful, or if more info is required

Types of conversational responses

- **Return statements** – “Going back to where we were ...”
 - Shown when returning a user to a process flow (after an out-of-flow Q&A)
 - Let's the user know what's happening

Tips

- Have a range of different statements so that the same statements don't keep reappearing
- Keep it brief – the focus should be on the text that follows
- Don't include a question – E.g. “Shall we go back to where we left off?”

Types of conversational responses

- **Did Not Know statements**

- Shown when there is a **low confidence, or no, answer to a question**

Tips

- Consider using a process flow to help drill down to what the user was after and direct them to useful information – even if it's a link to the website
- IF you are using a statement rather than a process flow, ensure you have a range of different statements so that the same statements don't keep reappearing
- Think carefully about the wording –
 - If you apologise you may be giving a 'failure' statement
 - If you gloss over the fact that an answer could not be given you may convey lack of empathy for the user

Tips !

- **Use active voice rather than passive voice**
 - “You can apply for a credit card online” is more direct and **engaging** than “A credit card can be applied for online”
- **Use contractions where possible**
 - “I’m here to help” and “I’m not sure” are more natural and less formal than “I am here to help” and “I am not sure”
- **Keep sentences short**
 - Shorter sentences are easier to read on screen, and easier to follow when spoken via Text to Speech (TTS)
- **Use formatting to help increase readability**
 - Paragraphing, bulleted lists, commas and dashes all help readability

Tips !

- **Surround yourself with good examples of different types of responses**
 - Put them on a whiteboard or around your workstation
- **Read the answers out loud**
 - Does it sound stiff and formal or friendly and natural?
 - Imagine the answer being spoken to a customer who is in front of you
- **Ask other team members to read sample answers**
 - Getting a different perspective is useful
 - Good way of checking that you are following these guidelines

Tips ! 'bucket' inputs

- Bucket inputs are, typically, broad topics; E.g.
 - Food and restaurants
 - Geography
 - Politics , Religion and ethics
 - Movies and books
 - Weather

Examples

Q: What's the best restaurant in London (Bucket = Food and restaurants)

A: Let me tell you a secret – I don't eat!

Q: What do you think of the president? (Bucket = Politics)

A: To be honest, I don't really discuss politics at work – and I'm always at work!

Tips – substantive, deflecting, redirecting

- Responding to topic-based inputs include
 - Substantive response – answers the question; E.g.
Q: What's your favorite movie?
A: My favorite movie is Bladerunner because it breaks down the barriers between humans and AIs – they're not so different from each other
 - Deflecting response – responds to the question without actually answering it; E.g.
Q: What's the weather like in London?
A: The weather [in London] must be fascinating to humans – people are always asking me about it!
 - Redirecting response – redirects the user back to the core areas; E.g.
Q: What do you think of religion?
A: Religion is not my area of expertise, but I do know about ABC bank's credit cards!

Let's get started !