

Our writing principles

These are the principles by which we write, re-write and edit copy for all University of Worcester communications.

Write for the reader

We try to get inside the heads of our readers. Using [empathy mapping](#) we paint a picture of one individual whose thoughts and feelings can ring true with all prospective students. When writing we keep this person in mind and adjust our content and tone accordingly.

We ask ourselves whether copy will be relevant, interesting and appealing to the reader? We can't expect them to act on it if we haven't thought about what they need, want and feel.

Write in an active rather than passive way

Active writing is clearer and more dynamic. Here are some examples of passive vs active writing:

Passive: The mat was sat on by the cat

Active: The cat sat on the mat

We also address the reader as 'you' where possible.

Passive: More information can be obtained by prospective students from our course pages.

Active: You can find more information on our course pages.

To know whether you are writing in the active or passive voice, identify the subject of the sentence and decide whether the subject is doing the action or being acted upon.

Be informal

We write as we'd speak, being friendly but not over familiar.

Create pace and rhythm by varying sentence length

A short first sentence. This helps grab the reader's attention, while your second sentence builds on what your first says. Now you can use a longer third sentence that not only supports and substantiates the first two sentences, but also lines you up for a pithy ending. There, you've got rhythm.

Say the important stuff first

We imagine we're talking to the reader face-to-face. We think what they'd want to hear first, then second, third, etc. Considering what would be the natural, logical flow?

Personality

Belonging

Our language is warm, friendly, open and inviting. We use 'you' and 'we' and we give readers plenty of reminders about the supportive community we're all part of. We write as we speak, so we're not stuffy and formal, but we're not overly familiar either.

Purposeful

Our language brings out the benefits in everything we do. It's clear, concise and straight talking, so those benefits stand out and our audience can really see what a difference we make to their lives.

Inspiring

Our language is inspiring, uplifting and positive. It's interesting, with imaginative touches and varied pace, so our audience feels excited about being part of Worcester and the opportunities that brings.

Six ways to tighten your writing

1. Take out prepositions

Tiny words like 'of', 'in' and 'at' often aren't needed.

Were you the victim of an email scam?

Were you an email scam victim?

2. Get rid of 'that'

You can almost always delete 'that' without changing the sentence's meaning:

I feel that my life has changed since I've been here.

I feel my life has changed since I've been here.

3. Avoid 'helping verbs' like 'do' and 'have'

First, you have to apply online.

First, apply online.

4. Take out other redundant words

Don't repeat things ~~needlessly~~.

5. Ditch the describing words

They're often unnecessary (though not in all cases).

Our ~~clear~~ focus on security ~~completely~~ reassures students.

6. Use contractions

Don't be afraid to speak like you'd talk

Do not be afraid to speak like you would talk.