

General Writing Guidelines

The ContentLab.io Formula For Success!

We believe in empowering our authors to create their best work possible. This means we're always happy to support you, and we encourage you to ask any questions that may come up during the writing process. Here are some foundations that will set you up for success.

If a client style guide is presented to you, always refer to that!

ContentLab.io's Tone & Voice

Voice makes us human. Voice helps us connect with one another and deliver information in an impactful way. As a technical writing service, it's especially important that we use voice to humanize our communications, so that we can create a meaningful relationship with our audience. The content that we write is technical, but we make it approachable to someone who is non-technical, even if they may not understand all the terminology.

Tone is how we demonstrate empathy. It's how we identify with someone else. Getting it right means putting yourself in someone else's shoes and making sure that what you say adds value to their life. When writing or speaking for ContentLab.io, make your words...

Authoritative: Our space can be complicated. Some players lean into jargon and opaque tech speak. We don't. We aren't interested in showing off what we know. We're interested in adding **value** to businesses—whether that means working with them or educating them. We do this by providing relevant information in a way that's easy to understand. **Our content subject matter can be difficult. Our writing shouldn't be. That's why we're always clear and concise.**

Straightforward: We respect our audience's time. After all, they are busy. So we cut straight to the point without being curt. Clarity trumps everything else. If language doesn't convey something of value, it fails.

We don't make things about us. We put our reader first. We consider their frame of mind and make sure to communicate with them from that point of view.

Authentic: We are unapologetic about who we are. We are a group of developers and technical minds that are brimming with enthusiasm. We passionately want to share knowledge and better

our communities. We are human, and our voice reflects that. We're approachable, relatable, and helpful.

General Article Format & Length

Articles of any length and white papers follow the same basic formula:

- a. **Introduction:** Grab the reader's interest. Bring in the general topic of the article. Introduce the problem being solved and the point of the article.
- b. **Body:** A discussion of the topic and the solution. Say what the evidence is, give an example of the evidence, and tell why the evidence is important.
- c. **Conclusion:** A wrap-up that reminds the reader of the point of the article and the final solution. The conclusion may include a call to action. (AKA: What do you want the reader to *do*?)

The most successful articles stick closely to the given outline, and adhere to the given length guidelines. We always appreciate when authors are enthusiastic and want to write more, but we recommend not exceeding more than ~400 words above the target content length.

Technical Accuracy & Language

If your article contains code or includes screenshots, ensure the code works and that the screenshots reflect what will actually appear. Ensure that all technical information is accurate and up-to-date. If you have questions about a client's technology, we will happily put you in contact with a technical expert to ensure you're on the right track.

With very advanced topics, don't assume a reader knows as much as you do. A good practice is to list any prerequisites that may be needed at the beginning of the article. For example, an article on web development can assume the reader knows HTML and JavaScript, but it would be worth pointing them to [documentation](#) before launching into a deep dive on installing components via NPM.

Avoid linking to Wikipedia to explain a concept. For the best article flow, briefly provide the explanation in your own words within the article itself. Use external links sparingly, and only when they are needed to support a point or are necessary. You may point readers to prerequisites or list further reading at the end of the article, but articles must be able to stand on their own.

We highly recommend running your article through a free proofreader such as [Grammarly](#), [Hemingway](#), or [Ginger](#) before submission.

General Tips For Success

- We use U.S. English. We do this since the majority search with American English, which makes content that uses it more discoverable.
- Addressing the reader: Addressing the reader directly can make content more engaging. It's also a great way to forge a connection with someone on the other side of the screen. To do this, use the second person, e.g. "you".
- Write in the active voice, and avoid the passive voice. Use the active voice when someone is doing something. If you're confused by this or aren't sure you can recognize passive voice, [here's](#) a useful tool.
- If you are including **code snippets**, the best way to format this is to paste the code with a monospace font like Consolas, to make the text stand out. Please avoid using screenshots of code. Try to use consistent formatting and indents. **Code blocks count toward the article word count.**
- Remember to capitalize brand names!
- Always give credit when you're using someone else's work and use their attribution guidelines. If you are using images, test data, or any other kinds of data, ensure that it is **public domain** and provide attribution to the source according to their attribution guidelines as well. Additionally, always cite work that is not your own by using an embedded hyperlink to refer readers to where you got your information from. With long-form, defer to the Chicago Manual of Style.
- For the nitty-gritty look on grammar and punctuation, reference our [ContentLab Style Guide](#).

Remember, we're always here to help!

Happy writing.