

# Copywriting Style Guide

## Welcome

This Content Style Guide is just that: a guide. Its goal is to help us write clear and consistent content that inspires, engages, informs and motivates our audience while giving us some basic parameters. Please use it as a reference when writing material for Zebra.

Zebra's messaging framework is made up of one overarching message: Zebra delivers a performance edge.

### Other helpful resources:

- [Asset Naming Guidelines](#)
- [SEO Guidelines](#)
- [Digital Style Guide](#)
- [Brand Guidelines](#)
- [Voice & Messaging Guidelines](#)

## Table of Contents

3	<a href="#">Writing Goals and Principles</a>
4	<a href="#">Voice and Tone</a>
4	<a href="#">Voice</a>
5	<a href="#">Tone</a>
6	<a href="#">Grammar and Mechanics</a>
6	<a href="#">Basics</a>
7	<a href="#">Guidelines</a>
	<a href="#">Abbreviations and acronyms</a>
	<a href="#">Active voice</a>
	<a href="#">Bullet points</a>
	<a href="#">Capitalization and titles</a>
	<a href="#">Citations and references</a>
	<a href="#">Colloquialisms</a>
	<a href="#">Copyright and legal attribution</a>
	<a href="#">Contractions</a>
	<a href="#">E.g. and i.e.</a>
	<a href="#">Email</a>
	<a href="#">Headlines and subheads</a>
	<a href="#">Numerals</a>
	<a href="#">POV</a>
	<a href="#">Pronouns</a>
	<a href="#">Punctuation</a>
	<a href="#">Slang and jargon</a>
	<a href="#">Spelling</a>
	<a href="#">Superscripts and footnotes</a>
	<a href="#">Symbols</a>
	<a href="#">Tagline usage</a>
	<a href="#">Translations</a>

## Writing Goals and Principles

### Our content aims to:

**Inspire.** We have a vision for transformation at the edge of enterprise and seek to inspire our customers and partners to capture their performance edge.

**Inform.** We know through customer research and analysis what it takes to get things done and are ready to deliver purpose-built products and tangible, workable solutions to our customers.

**Engage.** We communicate with people. We respect them—we don't talk at them, and we don't talk down to them.

**Motivate.** We push our customers and partners to be their best by offering new perspectives, understanding and actionable plans.

### To achieve these goals, we make sure our content is:

**Clear.** We skip the fluff and make the complex simple. Our writing is straightforward and inviting—we don't use five words when one word will work.

**Honest.** We base our writing off facts and research. We don't make false claims. We don't use hyperbole.

**Useful.** We write content that our readers value.

## Voice and Tone

Our voice is our point of view. It's how we present ourselves, and it guides how we communicate our personality and our values. This is how we speak to our partners and customers.

Our tone is how we say something. It's more like our attitude—it provides emotional context.

### Voice

Zebra's voice persona is The Inventive Ally. We are inspiring, pragmatic, collaborative. Think: inspiring TED talk speaker, insightful coach, supportive mentor, thoughtful peer.

When writing copy,

**Lead with possibility.** We seek to inspire by finding a way to reframe a situation/challenge with a fresh perspective. We build a sense of possibility and excitement through bold, action-oriented language that exudes confidence and prompts response.

**Make it real.** We bring ideas to life in tangible ways. We balance future-oriented thought with a use-case-focused, works-in-real-life mindset. Answer the “so what” and go beyond functional benefits to answer “why”—demonstrate real impacts.

**Show we're in it together.** We demonstrate our understanding and appreciation of our customers and partners in how we speak. We make it about them—their goals, their achievements, their contributions—and show that we're invested and committed to their success at every step of the way.

Voice and messaging work together to shape our expression

- Our brand voice guides how we speak to our customers
- Our messaging guides what we say to our customers

Refer to the [Voice & Messaging Guidelines](#) for more on our voice (p.5) and how to adapt our message for different audiences (p.35–36).

## Tone

Zebra maintains a positive, conversational tone. It's important to be clear and inclusive.

While our voice won't change, our tone may differ by asset type, media or platform. To adjust tone appropriately, consider the reader's state of mind. Are they looking for a solution on our website? Are they curious about current industry trends? Do they need more details to make a decision?

Consider the readers' needs in different situations and different stages of the buyer's journey.

## Examples:

Type of writing	Audience	Tone	Example
<b>Social media</b>	Generally, people already following us	Knowledgeable, friendly	Retailers can recover 66% of out-of-stock incidents. Download The New Retail Mandate, our free study, to learn how.
<b>Vision study/White paper</b>	Visionary, Solutions, Thought-leaders	Direct, impartial	Every mobile deployment is unique, and yet, whether you need five devices or five thousand, one thing never changes: every business wants their investment to be a success.
<b>Email</b>	Generally, someone interested in us who we're trying to build a relationship with	Conversational, educational	Uh-oh, did you lose your customers' interest? Read our study to boost their shopping experience.

## Grammar and Mechanics

Grammar and mechanics help keep our writing clear and consistent. This section lays out our in-house style, which applies to all content we create.

In general, we use U.S. English and adhere to the [AP Style Guide](#).

Keep in mind that we need to write for global usage that can easily translate to our other regions.

### Basics

**Write for all readers.** Write for the reader and the skimmer. Help everyone read better by grouping related ideas together using descriptive headlines and subheads.

**Be concise.** Don't use a long word when a short word works. Try to keep sentences short. Long blocks of text are difficult to read online and can convey pretension. But don't sacrifice messaging or conveying a key point for the sake of brevity.

**Be specific.** Avoid vague language and fluff.

**Be consistent.** Stick to the direction included in this guide and the [helpful resources](#) provided on page 1.

## Guidelines

### Abbreviations and acronyms

Spell out the abbreviation or [acronym](#) on first mention. Use the short version for all other references.

Exception: For SEO purposes (e.g., blog posts and web copy) it's acceptable to spell out the abbreviation or acronym on first mention, then use the short or full version interchangeably on all other references.

- First use: Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)
- Second use: RFID
- First use: Business to business (B2B)
- Second use: B2B

### Active voice

Use active voice. Avoid passive voice. The active voice is usually more direct.

- Yes: Boost productivity with the TC20
- No: The TC20 will boost productivity

### Bullet points

**Do not** use end punctuation if:

- A bullet point is a single sentence
- The bullet point is a simple list

**Do** use end punctuation if:

- A bullet point is multiple sentences

### Examples:

Bulleted list:

- Enhance brand experience
- Enable fulfillment
- Leverage loyalty programs

Single-sentence bullet:

- Retailers experience more inventory swings due to increasing returns

Multi-sentence bullet:

- Our mobile devices enhance clinician effectiveness with reliable communication and secure messaging. They also enable real-time access to vitals, diagnostics and more.

## Capitalization and titles

**Individuals:** Capitalize a person's title only if it precedes his or her name and isn't modified.

- Chief Executive Officer Anders Gustafsson
- Anders Gustafsson, chief executive officer of Zebra Technologies

**Works:** Things such as articles, books, movies, paintings, etc. get **title-style capitalization** and quotation marks.

- He couldn't put down "The AP Stylebook."
- Her favorite album was "Love Is Hell."

**Zebra verticals, solutions, products:** Only capitalize when talking about a specific Zebra vertical, solution or product. Otherwise, we do not typically capitalize within body copy.

- Yes: Discover your Zebra healthcare technology solution today
- No: Discover your Zebra Healthcare Technology Solution today

**Everything else:** When in doubt, use **title-style capitalization** and roman type for titles. This also applies to website buttons, press releases and most PowerPoint decks.

**Do:**

- Capitalize words with four or more letters
- Capitalize the first and last word
- Capitalize major words (nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs and subordinate conjunctions)
- Lowercase articles (a, an, the), coordinating conjunctions and prepositions
  - *Exception: Capitalize any word after a colon (:)*

**Examples:**

Perception Gaps: The 2019 Shopper Vision Study

Solutions Guide: A Hands-On Approach to RFID

## Citations and references

Legal best practice for referencing any published source is to list the full citation as a footnote. Whenever possible, find the original source the statistic came from.

## Colloquialisms

Don't use these since they don't translate well to our other regions.

**Example: No-brainer** can mean something that requires little to no thought. "the MC3300 is a business no-brainer to boosting productivity from front to back."

## Contractions

They're a good way to convey a friendly, familiar tone. Try to avoid excessive use.

## Copyright and legal attribution

Please refer to our [copyright and legal attribution](#) document. Include this in the footer of marketing assets and at the end of PowerPoint decks and videos.

## E.g. and i.e.

e.g., meaning *for example*, should always be followed by a comma

i.e., meaning *in other words*, should always be followed by a comma

## Email

Do not hyphen email. Do use a hyphen with other e- terms: e-book, e-business, e-commerce.

## Headlines and subheads

In general, follow [brand guide](#). **If in doubt, use sentence-style capitalization.**

Use **sentence-style capitalization** when headlines and subheads are more of a phrase.

Use **title-style capitalization** when headlines and subheads are titles on pages, product names (proper nouns), Vertical Market Solutions, etc.

### **Hyphenated words in headlines, subheads or sub-section headers**

When using **title-style capitalization**: Capitalize the first letter of each major word.

- 5 Steps to Improve the In-Store Experience
- Business-to-Business Marketing Tips

When using **sentence-style capitalization**: Do not capitalize hyphenated words.

- 5 steps to improve the in-store experience
- Business-to-business marketing tips

### **Numerals**

In general, spell out one through nine. Use figures for 10 or above and whenever preceding a unit of measure or referring to ages. Do spell out any numeral if it is at the start of a sentence. The only exception is years.

- One, two, three, etc.
- 10, 11, 12, etc.
- Forty years ago ...
- 1999 was a good year

Numbers over three digits get commas. Write out big numbers in full. Abbreviate if there's a space restraint (K = thousand, M = million, B = billion); do not use "K" to abbreviate in dollar amounts.

- 999
- 1,000
- 1 million
- 1B or \$1B

### **Ages**

Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun.

- A 6-year-old girl
- The girl is 6 years old
- The woman is in her 30s

### **Currency**

Because we write for global usage, remember to specify currency only when necessary.

- Yes: 4.28 billion USD or US\$4.28 billion
- No: USD \$4.28 billion

### **Dates, years and decades**

To avoid dating our materials, try to avoid including dates whenever possible.

But if you must, spell out the day of the week and the month. Abbreviate if space is an issue (e.g., tweet, infographic, etc.).

- Saturday, January 24
- Sat., Jan. 24
- Class of '66
- The 1950s
- The 1800s

Note: When translating to British English, format dates as **day-month-year**.

- Saturday, 24 January 2018

### **Decimals and fractions**

Spell out fractions less than one.

- Yes: two-thirds
- No: 2/3

Use decimal points when a number can't be easily written out as a fraction, like 3.14 or 47.2.

### **Dimensions (depth, height, length and width)**

- He is 5 feet 6 inches tall
- The 5-foot woman
- The 6-foot-long box
- The rug is 9 feet by 12 feet
- The 9-by-12 rug

For very technical writing, use an apostrophe to indicate "feet" and quotation marks to indicate "inches" (6'5"). If product dimensions are ever necessary:

- 3"D x 4"H x 2"L x 4"W

### **Ordinals**

Numbers indicating order. Spell out first through ninth, use figures starting with 10th. Do not superscript.

- Yes: 10th Annual Vision Study
- No: 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Vision Study

Exception: Use figures if it's part of the name/title.

- 3rd Annual Vision Study

### **Percentages**

Use the % sign when paired with a numeral, with no space, in most cases. For amounts less than 1%, precede the decimal with a zero: The cost of living rose 0.6%.

- Yes: Of those surveyed, 62% are using or plan to use mobile technology.

### **Telephone numbers**

We don't use dashes, only spaces between number sets. Do use a country code.

- 1 800 423 0442
- +1 800 423 0442

### **Miscellaneous examples:**

- 1 in 4 voters
- A ratio of 2-to-1, a 2-1 ratio

### **POV**

When writing about Zebra, use first person point of view.

- Refer to Zebra as "Zebra" or "we," not "it"

When addressing our reader, use second person point of view. Use sparingly.

### **Pronouns**

Using "they," "them," and "their" as a singular pronoun is ok.

## Punctuation

### Ampersands

In general, don't use. Exception: If it's part of a company or brand name.

### Apostrophes

The apostrophe's most common use is to make a word possessive. If the word ends in 's' and is singular, also add an 's. If the word ends in 's' and is plural, only add an apostrophe.

- Jeff's team
- Anders's presentation
- The managers' meeting

**Do not** use apostrophe with decades:

- No: 1950's
- Yes: '90s

### Colons

The most common use is at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, tabulations, texts, etc. (If using a colon to introduce a list, please refer also to the [bullet points](#).)

Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it's a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: *He promised this: The company will make good all the losses.* But: *There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility*

### Commas

We don't use the Oxford comma (serial comma) when writing lists.

- Yes: Jeff, Tim and Rob
- No: Hardware, software, supplies, and services

### Dashes and hyphens

Use an **en dash** (–) without spaces on either side to establish a span or range. It commonly symbolizes “to” or “through” between values.

- Monday–Friday
- 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Use an **em dash** (—) without spaces on either side to offset an aside.

- Each device includes Mobility DNA—a comprehensive suite of industry-specific apps.

Another way to use an em dash is to offset a series of words separated by commas.

- He listed the qualities—intelligence, humor, independence—that he liked in an executive.

Use a **hyphen** (-) without spaces on either side to form a compound adjective or to join two words into a single idea.

- First-time user

### **Ellipses**

Ellipses ( ... ) are constructed with three periods and a space on either side. Generally, we don't use these when writing B2B marketing material. It can be used to indicate an incomplete thought or for condensing a speech, but use them sparingly. Don't use for emphasis or drama. Don't use in titles or headlines.

- “Where did the donuts go?” Christy asked. Lain said, “I don't know ...”

Ellipses can indicate the deletion of one or more words in quotes, texts and documents.

- “Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. ... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Exclamations**

Typically avoid emphasizing statements by using an exclamation mark. End mildly exclamatory sentences with a period. Or use a comma after mild interjections.

### **Periods**

Include only a single space between sentences.

Periods go inside quotation marks. They go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside when the parenthetical stands alone.

- John said, “I sent the email.”
- I sent another email (it includes two more attachments).
- I forwarded the email. (John should have spellchecked.)

### **Quotation marks**

Use quotes to refer to words and letters, titles of short works (like articles and poems) and direct quotations.

Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

- John said, “A wise man once told me, ‘Never email past 5.’”

Do not use quotes to indicate irony. To maintain a positive voice and tone, it's best to be sincere and honest.

Placement with other punctuation:

- The period and comma always go within quotation marks
- The dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point go within quotation marks only when they apply to the quoted matter. Otherwise, they go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

### Semicolons

Use sparingly. They usually connect complicated or separate thoughts that can be simplified. Try an em dash (—) or start a new sentence.

- The package should have been delivered last week; it arrived today.
- Some of our most satisfied clients are John Doe, CEO of ABC Company; Joe Shmoe, CFO of DEF Inc.; and Jane Spain, COO of GHI Electronics.

### Slang and jargon

Don't use slang or jargon. Write in plain English. We want our writing to be accessible to everyone. If you need to use a technical term, briefly define it so everyone can understand.

#### Examples:

- **Drag** is slang for something *boring, tiresome or troublesome*
- Our Enterprise Mobility Development Kit (EMDK) includes a comprehensive set of **APIs**—interfaces for building web applications—and sample code.
- **Pain point** is jargon for *problem, challenge, frustration or difficulty*

### Spelling

We write our global content in U.S. English, which we later translate to British English. A quick list of some common words and their spelling:

- Back end (n.)
  - The system is on the back end
- Back-end (compound adj.)
  - Update your back-end systems
- Barcode

- Buy online, pick up in-store
  - When writing about buy online, pick up in-store, include (click and collect)
- Front-line (adj.)
  - Zebra solutions are designed with front-line users and workplaces in mind
- Front-line (compound modifier)
  - Zebra delivers a performance edge to the front line of business
- Fulfillment
- Futurereadiness
- Handheld
- In-store (compound adj.)
  - In-store sale only
  - The in-store experience is different than shopping online
- In store (as two words it means in reserve; awaiting)
  - I don't know what work has in store for me today
- Omnichannel
- On demand
  - Print labels on demand
- On-demand (compound adj.)
  - We deliver on-demand printing solutions
- Purpose-built
- Real-time (compound adj.)
  - Real-time location system
  - Zebra connects you to real-time data
- Real time (compound modifier)
  - Zebra connects people, assets and systems in real time for best-action guidance
- Touch-screen (adj.)
  - When used as an adjective, use a hyphen
- Touch screen (n.)
  - When used as a noun, spell out as two words
- Transportation and Logistics

## Superscripts and footnotes

Do not leave any space between the superscript figure and the preceding word. If a punctuation mark follows the word, place the superscript figure immediately after the punctuation mark, except for the dash, which it precedes.

### Examples:

- The growth of e-commerce has also led to an increase in global returns volume totaling \$400 billion to \$1.8 trillion U.S. Dollars,<sup>1</sup> driving retailers' costs higher.
- A \$2.3 trillion global e-commerce market reflects how profoundly shopper expectations have recalibrated worldwide.<sup>2</sup>
- 73% of consumers are omnichannel shoppers<sup>3</sup>—they spend more than single-channel consumers, but most supply chains aren't operating at an omnichannel level.

### Do not superscript ordinal numbers:

- Yes: 2nd
- No: 2<sup>nd</sup>

## Symbols

### Registered Trademark (®)

The register mark is used only when defining a Zebra product. For example, Zebra® scanners. It should always be used on first appearance but isn't required for subsequent uses within a single asset.

Zebra, the company, never includes the register mark.

- Yes: Zebra® scanners
- No: Zebra®'s scanners
- Yes: Zebra™ supplies
- No: Zebra® supplies
- Yes: Zebra® software
- No: Zebra Technologies®
- No: "... solutions from Zebra® ..."

## Tagline usage

**Do not** overuse the tagline phrase 'capture your edge' in body copy.

**Do not** use the 'capture your edge' words of the tagline more than once.

**Do not** use the tagline as a headline.

**For more, please reference the [Brand Guideline](#) (p.26–27).**

**Do:** Lower-case the entire tagline if it's being used as a summation in body copy

- Today, innovation is exploding on the edge of the enterprise—where a company's people touch the products they make and the people they serve. Together with our partners, we want to help you capture your performance edge.

## Translations

We deliver assets in 3 English languages: U.S. English, British English and Asia Pacific English, which is the same as British English.

*Tip: When translating from U.S. English to British English, perform a search and replace.*

General suffix translations from U.S. English to British English:

- -ize changes to -ise
- -zation changes to -sation
- -zing changes to -sing
- -led changes to -lled
- -ling changes to -lling \

Some common words and their spelling:

- Authorisation
- Behaviour
- Centre
- Click and collect
- Digitisation
- Digitise
- Digitising
- Fulfil
- Fulfilment
- Future readiness
- Labelled
- Labelling
- Labour
- Maximise

- Maximising
- Minimise
- Minimising
- Operationalised
- Optimisation
- Optimise
- Personalisation
- Personalise
- Program
  - Refers to computer programs and their programming
- Programme
  - Refers to plan of action, initiative and all other meanings
- Recognise
- Utilise
- Utilising

When writing about **buy online, pick up in-store** please always include **(click and collect)** because it is a popular term in EMEA regions.

## OPTIONAL SECTION

### Revision History

REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE	AUTHOR
1.0		June 2019	