

THE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the American College of Education Writing Guide.

This guide has just a few goals; make writing simple for our brand, align on expectations, and continue to share our college's heart-warming story in a unique way.

Effortless for everyone.

No matter your background or role, writing can sometimes feel daunting. This guide will aspire to make writing copy for our brand easier and more approachable.

Committing to consistency.

Across teams, at the American College of Education or the BSMNT, this guide will clearly convey what's expected when we write, so our brand has a harmonious, engaging message at every touch point.

Sharing our story.

The higher education online space is competitive and growing at light-speed. To differentiate our brand, our writing guide will reinforce our cornerstone message—getting students where they want to go—and provide wayfinding language mirroring our visual direction.

Key messaging:

These phrases and messages—alluding to a journey—can be used as headlines, support copy, and anywhere else they seem to fit.

Examples:

- **Brand tagline:** Here to get you there.
- Find your way.
- Blaze your trail.
- Clear the path.
- Go the distance.
- Our north star.
- Light the way.
- Lead the way.
- Big journeys start with small steps.
- Move forward.
- Let's get you there.

THE FOUNDATION

Defining Our Voice.

Imagine our voice as the qualities that never change when we write.

Cutting the clutter.

We know our industry can often use confusing and complex language. That's why we write in a way that's conversational. It helps us convey a sense of authenticity and compassion. For every piece of copy we produce, we aim to always be:

Smart, not pretentious.

Approachable, not condescending.

Relatable, not casual.

Clear, not convoluted.

Here's how we previously wrote:

"Since our founding in 2005, ACE has made the deliberate decision not to participate in Title IV federal student loan funding programs. In doing so, our tuition is half — and

sometimes even two-thirds less — than tuition at other institutions. Many ACE students pay out of pocket and are therefore able to graduate debt-free.”

Here’s how we write today:

“Here’s the scoop, our tuition is 50–70% less than other online colleges. What’s our secret? We actually don’t have one—we just choose not to participate in Title IV federal student loan funding. And the best part, we get to pass our savings straight to our students.”

Our Approach to Tone.

Our voice never changes, but our tone does! How we write is always dependent on two things; the emotional state of the reader, and the context. In other words, what is the reader feeling (anger, happiness, etc.)? And where are they?

A few examples:

- *If a student emailed us with a concern about paying for next semester, it's important that we're tactful and empathetic. We wouldn't want our response to feel blunt or detached from such a delicate matter.*
- *If we're writing copy for LinkedIn, a professional networking site, we might be a bit more formal in our writing than Instagram—considering the demographic and context.*

A note about organic and paid advertising:

Our tone will always adapt if our post is organic versus paid (or vice-versa). They both demand a different approach due to their context and limitations.

Tips to keep in mind for organic:

- Be especially friendly and conversational in tone. It creates trust.
- Don't worry about the character count—there is none!

Organic post example:

Onward and upward to 2021! #HappyNewYear, everyone! 🎉

Tips to keep in mind for paid:

- Make the most of your ad. Be cognizant of the character count for each platform.
- Be more direct (based on where the user is in the funnel). You have a motive—we want the user to explore further or take the next step.

Paid ad example:

Why choose between work and school? You set the pace. Our online programs are designed for working professionals, just like you.

THE CONSUMER JOURNEY

Writing for the Consumer Journey.

In our current funnel, we have three phases of messaging; awareness, consideration, and intent. We'll discuss the nuance of each, but the goal of our messaging remains the same. Get potential students to make the best educational decision possible—to attend the American College of Education.

Phase 01: Awareness.

The earliest phase of the funnel. The user may have no prior experience with our

brand, so our tone isn't pushy; it's soft and introductory. We're just getting acquainted. The goal of our messaging at this point is to create awareness and to encourage the user to explore further.

Messaging tips:

- Introduce our brand. Communicate essential information clearly; the name, purpose, offerings, etc.
- Use metaphorical language. We don't need to get into the weeds or focus on specific program benefits.
- Talk about flexibility. We might want to mention that ACE is 100% online.
- Communicate qualities like support, care, etc.
- Avoid writing about financial costs. It might devalue or call into question the quality of the education **(Cited by Scarborough)**.

Ad Examples:

ACE would like to see more examples.

Social:

You set the schedule. Earn your degree when it's convenient for you with the flexibility of our online programs.

Display:

[Frame 1] "I chose my own path and my own pace." - Samantha.

[Frame 2] Speed up your learning now. Slow it down later.

Phase 02: Consideration.

The middle phase of the funnel. The user is now familiar with our brand. They've been to our site. We can begin to differentiate the American College of Education from

other online institutions, and our tone can be more forthright. And at the very least, our goal is for the user to continue to explore our programs or sign-up for an event.

Messaging tips:

- Differentiate our brand. Use statistics, facts, testimonials, etc.
- Speaking to the affordability of ACE is now appropriate (**Cited by Scarborough**).
- Continue to push flexibility.
- For specific programs, the writing can mention key benefits or address possible fears of the user.
- Per Scarborough research, we can write to the user-friendliness of the platform.

Ad Examples:

Social:

We want you to succeed! Our guided dissertation approach keeps you moving forward.

Display:

[Frame 1] Go further.

[Frame 2] Without years of debt.

Phase 03: Intent.

The final phase of the funnel. The user now has the intention of enrolling at ACE specifically or in a particular program. We're no longer concerned about being conversational—our aim is to get the user to begin or finish the application process. We can be straightforward, and with discretion, assertive.

Messaging tips:

- Create a sense of urgency. Mention timing, discounts, or deadlines.
- Write with assurance. Don't be timid.
- Speak to potential financial barriers or benefits.
- Acknowledge that the user is almost there. Try to drive them—as much as possible—to take the next step.

Social:

The first step is always the hardest! It's your LAST chance to enroll before the new year. Apply by Nov. 6 for the Nov. 9 term start!

Display:

[Frame 1] Keep the ball rolling.

[Frame 2] Apply by April 3.

Thanks for Reading!

We hope you found this guide helpful.