# Writing style guide

# Introduction

## About this guide

The purpose of this writing style guide is to ensure consistency in the JOIN branding. It outlines how we write and communicate, either as JOIN or about JOIN. The rules and guidelines explained below help you understand our style and how to represent our brand.

**The goal of this guide is to:**

- Establish a cohesive brand to help build customer trust.
- Ensure a smooth and consistent experience for everyone interacting with our brand.
- Create a clear framework that helps us remain consistent as we scale.

## About JOIN

JOIN is a freemium talent attraction software that helps companies find, attract, and hire the best talent faster. We offer solutions such as one-click job ad multiposting to 15+ free and 250+ premium job boards and an easy-to-use applicant tracking system to help companies make the right hiring decisions more quickly.

Over the years, we've helped over 100,000 companies — from small startups to large enterprises like Lufthansa and Sony — hire better faster.

## Before we start

This guide provides a holistic view of our company's writing style. This **doesn't** include general best practices on how to write copy or content for the web, such as on-page SEO factors to consider.

What this guide **does** include is the following three main sections:

1. Tone and voice
2. Grammar and style
3. Translation and localisation

# Section 1: Tone and voice

We are here to democratise talent attraction software and help companies of all sizes hire easier and faster. This means our purpose is to demystify the world of talent attraction, and our writing's tone and voice should always reflect that.

Tone and voice are often blended together into one and labelled tone of voice. But the two are actually slightly different. In short:

**Someone's voice can't change, but their tone can**.

And it works like that in writing as well. The voice is the part of the writing that won't be adapted, no matter where our content is published or who it addresses. Our voice always remains the same.

Our tone, however, may slightly change depending on the medium we use or the specific topic we're writing about. We have our preferences, as written below, but we can adapt them if needed. Because sometimes, we might just need to tone it down a bit.

## Tone

JOIN's tone tends to be informal, friendly, and conversational. We write like we're talking to a colleague in the office, but never forcibly casual. We remain true to ourselves and don't try to be something we're not.

Sure, we can throw in a joke here and there. But we don't try to force the fun. Our sense of humour is subtle and witty, not in your face and over the top. It's always inclusive and respectful, never inappropriate. Our tone is generally optimistic and encouraging, with half-full glasses and positive vibes.

As we write, we adjust our tone to match the target audience and the reader's mindset. Writing a blog post about a cheerful topic like office parties? Then a little pun might be part of the fun. Writing a glossary entry about burnout? Then adding a joke isn't a good shout.

## Voice

At JOIN, we know how difficult recruitment can be. We recognise that the industry can be a minefield of confusing terminology. And we empathise with the struggles our customers face every day.

That's why we write positively upbeat and tirelessly supportive. We want to assist and inspire, not patronise or confuse. From one-person companies to HR managers at large enterprises. If a person wants to attract talent, then we're here to help with compassion and clarity.

Our voice is based on three core principles:

**1. We write clearly**

We cut out the corporate jargon. No need for hyperbolic language and unnecessary acronyms. We preach simplicity. We write human for humans.

When writing we:

- Don't purposefully use complicated terms or jargon when there are clearer alternatives. Say "top talent", not "purple squirrel".

- If jargon is necessary, we give the reader an explanation first.
- Keep it simple by saying "we help you do your job the smart way", not "work in a much more intelligent manner in order to excel and achieve your career goals".
- We don't mind contractions, they're great!

**2. We write inclusively**

We care about open and transparent communication that's accessible, relatable, and understandable. Our writing should be inclusive and kind to all, aimed at never offending or excluding anybody.

When writing we:

- Don't refer to groups of people as "guys".
- Use pronouns appropriately and when in doubt or unspecified, use "they" rather than "he" or "he or she", or (when possible) simply call them by their name.
- Don't refer to groups of women as "girls" or "ladies".
- Use neutral, non-gendered terms where possible, such as "business person" rather than "businessman".
- Use anti-ableist language where possible to make content accessible and not discriminate against the disabled community, such as saying "disability" and not "handicap".
- Don't refer to people as "old" or "young" nor specifically mention their age, unless it is relevant to what you are writing about.
- Don't assume everyone has an academic background as the default.

For more detailed information on how to be more inclusive, empowering, and respectful in writing, we recommend using the [Conscious Style Guide](#).

**3. We write factually**

We base our arguments on research, data, and experience. We are helpful yet humble. We don't have all the answers, but we always try to find solutions. We state specific facts, not vague guesstimates.

When writing we:

- Do say "this McKinsey study states that", but not "some people state that".
- Say "93% of the population" rather than "everyone".
- Try to speak from our own experience, using language such as "here at JOIN".
- Aim for objectivity by showcasing both sides of the argument.

## Writing about JOIN

Our brand name is always fully capitalised. We talk about JOIN as a company, a tool, or a product. But never as a person or living entity.

**When referring to the JOIN product:**

- We are a recruiting software
- We are an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)
- We are a Talent Attraction Software (TAS) or Talent Acquisition Software
- **But we are not a platform**

## Writing for recruiters or candidates

In most of our writing, we speak to either recruiters or the recruiting representative in charge of hiring at a company.

However, in some cases, our writing will speak to candidates. For example, in our application form.

In English, our tone and voice remain the same for both audiences. In other languages, this may change depending on the formality of the specific language. We cover more on this topic in the [translation and localisation](#) section of this guide.

# Section 2: Grammar and style

Now, it's time for what might just be the most fun part of the JOIN Writing Style Guide (if you ask us): The rules of grammar and style. By laying down these guidelines on how we write, we ensure consistency and clarity in all our writing.

This helps boost our company brand as it appears more organised, professional, and, as a result, trustworthy. It also makes for a more pleasant user experience.

And, perhaps most importantly, it ensures our Content Team doesn't end up endlessly debating whether to use that Oxford comma or not (spoiler alert, we do use it).

Before turning to the nitty-gritty of proper punctuation, let's quickly summarise how we define our writing style. Here at JOIN, we:

- **Write for all types of readers**: Some read every word we write, while others simply skim. We use descriptive (sub)headers, write important phrases in bold ([it's also good for SEO](#)), and group ideas in bullet-point lists to make them more easily digestible (like this list).
- **Write concisely**: It improves the readability of a text and saves the reader time. Instead of "a majority of" we say "most", instead of "at all times" we say "always". We avoid redundancies like "brief summary" instead of "summary". We cut out fluff like "very" and unnecessary adjectives. You get the idea (or check out [this article](#)).
- **Format concisely**: We don't write full-page paragraphs. Instead, we create paragraphs of around 4-5 lines max and keep single sentences around 40 words max.

Below, we walk you through some of the most common questions (and answers) when it comes to grammar rules in writing. Although not a complete list (we're not writing a book), this should give you an idea of how we write at JOIN.

## British English

As a European company, it makes sense for us to write in British English rather than American English. The differences between the two can be subtle yet significant when trying to keep a consistent style in our writing.

Common differences include:

| British English | American English |
|---|---|
| -ise and -yse ("capitalise", "analyse") | -ize and -yze |
| -re ("centre", "metre") | -er |
| -our ("honour", "colour") | -or |
| Keeps -e for word modifications ("judgement", "liveable") | Drops -e |
| -l for certain verbs ("enrol", "fulfil") | -ll |
| -ll for certain past-tense verbs ("cancelled", "travelled") | -l |
| Random exceptions ("aluminium", "artefact", "grey") | "Aluminum", "artifact", "gray" |
| Collective nouns are plural ("the team are", "the staff have") | Collective nouns are singular ("the team is", "the staff has") |

Check out this article for more examples.

For further differences, such as in punctuation, see the respective section below (we told you this part would be fun).

## Abbreviations and acronyms

You don't always have to spell out an acronym if there's a reasonable chance that your reader will know what it means (like the EU).

In all other cases, you should write the full term the first time you mention it in your text and note the acronym in parentheses directly after. After this, you can use the abbreviated form throughout the rest of your text.

- **First use**: Applicant Tracking System (ATS)
- **Second use onward**: ATS

Abbreviations (like e.g., etc., or Dr.) generally don't have to be explained as they're common knowledge. Do note that e.g. ("for example") and i.e. ("that is") are not used in the main text, but rather placed inside parentheses followed by a comma. Otherwise, write out full words.

- Many famous artists (e.g. Cher and Elton John) love glitter
- Many famous artists, such as Cher and Elton John, love glitter

## Capitalisation and headings

We normally use sentence case capitalisation for all our headings and titles. This means we only use a capital for the first letter of the first word. Of course, standard capitalisation rules (such as capitalising country names) still apply. We prefer not to end a heading with a period.

Examples of sentence case use in headings:

- Recruiting software that helps you hire faster
- Your guide to attracting great European talent

Please note that this also applies to titles of sections displayed on our site, for example in the header, the footer, or the drop-down menu:

- Promote job ad
- What's new
- Recruitment and HR blog

Further instances of capitalisation include someone's job title or the name of a team (but not the actual word "team"). Some examples:

- They are part of the Content Marketing team
- Content Writer interview questions

Also, please don't capitalise random words and phrases. There is no capital in either "email" or "internet"…

## Emojis

We don't shy away from an emoji or two in a text or social post, but we don't overdo it. Use them sparingly and functionally.

## Numbers

In most cases, we use numerals when writing numbers.

Four exceptions to this rule:

- At the beginning of a sentence, like the one introducing this list (note: This doesn't apply to headings and titles, such as "10 best ways to attract talent").
- The numbers 0-9 are generally spelt out when not referring to specific measurements, units, or values. Use numerals when referring to a range (like in the previous sentence)
- In expressions that are more commonly spelt out ("JOIN is an all-in-one talent attraction solution").
- Simple fractions ("two-thirds").

In all other cases, we prefer using numerals. Further common number-related rules:

- Separate decimals with a period and thousands with a comma ("1,234,567.89").
- Use % rather than "per cent".
- Use a hyphen (-) to indicate a range or span ("It takes 10-20 days").
- Write the currency symbol before the number ("€15").
- Add a space between a numeral and a unit of measurement ("10 cm", "8 am").
- Use the degree symbol and the capital C to describe temperatures ("15 °C").

## Punctuation

### Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used for the possessive form of a word, adding 's. If a word ends in an s we only add the apostrophe, not an extra s. Examples:

- The monkey stole Frankie's banana.
- The monkey stole Chris' banana.
- The monkey stole the employees' bananas.

### Colons

Use a colon to introduce a list. This includes when inside a sentence. Also, note that the first letter after a colon is capitalised:

- They brought three types of fruits to the picnic: Apples, bananas, and oranges.

### Commas

As you can see in our previous example, we use the Oxford comma (also known as the serial comma) in our writing. It helps prevent misunderstandings:

- **No:** I love my parents, Cher and Elton John.
- **Yes:** I love my parents, Cher, and Elton John.

Unless your parents are Cher and Elton John, please use the Oxford comma.

**Dashes and hyphens**

Use a hyphen (-) to connect compounds or to indicate a range:

- Well-known artist
- Friday-Sunday

Use an em dash (—) to offset a part of text within a sentence:

- Three of us — Cher, Elton John, and I — went out for lunch.
- They love two artists in particular — Cher and Elton John.

**Ellipses**

Use ellipses (...) if you want, but sparingly and functionally. Also, remember that an ellipse is always three periods. Not more, not less.

**Periods**

Write periods outside parentheses and quotation marks (unless when the period is part of the quotation):

- Chris said, "I hate pizza".
- I hate pizza (and I'm also not a fan of cheese).

**Quotation marks**

Use quotation marks to refer to letters and words, titles of articles or books, and direct quotations. If there is a quotation inside a quotation, use single quotation marks.

Punctuation marks go inside the quotation if they are part of the quotation. Otherwise, the punctuation marks follow outside the quotation.

- Who was it again that said, "I hate pizza"?
- Elton screamed, "Hold me closer, tiny dancer", before he jumped into the crowd.

**Semicolons**

These can be tricky, and we prefer to just avoid them. In most cases, you're better off splitting your sentence into shorter sentences or using a different punctuation mark, such as the em dash.

Still set on using the semicolon? Then check out [this little video](#) to ensure you use it correctly:

**Ampersands**

Use ampersands when they are part of a specific name or title, like Ben & Jerry's. Otherwise, we prefer to just write "and".

## Text formatting

Use italics when writing a word in a different language than the main language of your text.

You may also use italics for emphasis if it really helps, but do so sparingly. In general, provide emphasis with powerful writing rather than having to show your reader where the emphasis is.

- In German, they call butterflies *Schmetterlinge*.
- You *really* need to stop doing that!

Use bolding to highlight a specific part of a text, such as an important phrase, keyword, or the first word of every bullet in a bullet point list.

Never underline or strike through words. Don't use a combination of different formatting — such as italics, bold, and caps — in a single word or phrase.

Leave one space between paragraphs. Not more, not less.

Bullet lists and numbered lists are great ways to make a text more readable and to attract attention to significant points. Number the list when the order is important, otherwise use bullets.

If one of the items in the list is a complete sentence, properly punctuate and capitalise all the items in the list. If the items are not complete sentences, only capitalise the first word of each item, but don't use further punctuation.

# Section 3: Translation and localisation

Different languages and cultures require different nuances in writing, and we don't want our texts to confuse or offend. So as an international, inclusive company we always try to localise our writing taking different audiences into account.

So although our tone, voice, and style of writing will generally follow the guidelines in the sections above, different languages may follow different rules.

For example, whereas English is informal and conversational, we might stick to the formal form of you (*Sie*) in German instead. Always check with your translator whether this is the case for a certain language.

Other common points to consider when translating and localising text:

- Thousands and decimal separators ("1,234.56" vs. "1.234,56")
- Measurements (metric vs. imperial system)
- Currency (in German the "€" is written after the amount, as in "200 €")

- Dates ("24-01-2022" vs. "24.01.2022" vs. "01-24-2022")

There are also some additional guidelines when it comes to translating JOIN's unique vocabulary. In general, we translate all product-related terminology and features into the respective language.

This means our tool's custom candidate pipeline becomes *Individualisierbare Kandidaten-Pipeline* in German. But JOIN is always JOIN in every language.

We created localised cheat sheets that summarise the rules outlined in the writing style guide above in a handy little checklist.

Internal translators also keep a term dictionary (at the time of writing this guide, this is maintained in the tool Lokalise), which can be exported for external use if needed. Writers and translators can use this information to ensure consistency and speed up the translation process.

You can find the cheat sheet in this document: [Cheat sheets May 2024 - combined](#).

Any further questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch!