

UX Writing Best Practices Checklist

For any phase of design, audit your screens and components against these content heuristics and best practices. Make a note of what needs revising, and track who will manage the updates.

Overall best practices

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Readable Is the text conversational, simple, and written at about a sixth-grade level? (Check your text: Hemingwayapp)		
Concise Are headlines and instruction text as short and clear as possible with no repetition, redundancy, ambiguity, or unnecessary words?		
Simple Does the text explain complex features and define terms on first use in plain language?		
Universal Does the word choice avoid technical jargon, idioms, and hard-to-translate phrases like "two peas in a pod"?		
Consistent Do text elements or UI components of the same type use parallel patterns and styles?		
Logical Does the ongoing text across screens have a discernible narrative progression that would make sense to anyone?		
Guiding Is the next required action clearly stated at each screen?		
User-focused Are user benefits & goals positively emphasized over company or product goals?		
Holistic Does the text compliment the visual layout and illustrations and vice versa? (Is the sum greater than the parts?)		
Prioritized If you squint at any screen, is the info hierarchy clear? Do the most important actions and info stand out?		

Voice, tone & terminology

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Empathetic Is the tone generally upbeat and appropriate for the users' context and emotions at each step in the flow?		
On-brand Do the grammar, terminology, phrasing and level of formality align with the company's brand voice principles?		
Consistent Is terminology used consistently across the entire user experience including from marketing through support, between OSs and devices, and in companion products?		
Global-friendly Is humor or whimsy culturally appropriate and universally relevant?		
Reliable Is the speaker's point of view consistent, trustworthy, and reliable throughout the user journey with no POV switches?		
Correct Have all spelling, grammar, capitalization, date and number formats been checked against the style guide?		

Error Messages

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Actionable Does the error say what happened in simple terms and explain what the user needs to do next to get back on task?		
Compassionate Do the language and the tone of the message match the severity of the issue and avoid blaming the user for the error?		
Proximal Are the error messages close to the relevant field or component where the error occurred? (More info: Closeness of Actions and Objects in GUI Design)		

Instructional text & tooltips

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Informative Do users have enough info and guidance at every point in the flow to make a decision and continue with confidence?		
Prepared Do users have enough context and info about consequences before beginning a multi-step task or taking a critical action?		
Reassuring Are complex decision points (like data-sharing or purchase confirmations) addressed with enough reassuring guidance and info?		
Generous Do tooltips provide additional details and info for users who need help understanding or who feel anxious?		
Supportive Are users given easy paths to learn more using progressive disclosure and avoiding "dead ends" (no path to more info)?		

Notifications & Alerts

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Front-loaded Do important phrases or words appear first in the message so that its meaning is clear to users even if truncated?		
Meaningful Are notifications or alerts useful and relevant to the user at the moment they're presented?		
Appropriate Is the tone of the notification appropriate for the user's context ?		
User-focused Where possible, are messages prioritized based on user needs not sales, marketing, or product team needs?		
Consistent Do individual alerts and messages conform to an overall framework that uses consistent patterns for similar message types? (Should be consistent for each mode and device type)		

Onboarding (First-Use)

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Value-oriented Does the text show the user how to experience the value of the product as soon as possible?		
User-focused Does the content focus on how the product will benefit users in solving their problem (and less on features or technical details)?		
Cohesive Do the stated product benefits match the major selling points promised in marketing materials?		
Necessary Do the initial screens convey only the essential info needed to inspire action and avoid any info not meaningful to first-time users?		
Reassuring Does the onboarding content answer the user's most pressing questions and remove mystery or doubt on first use?		
Respectful Before asking users to give access to data or grant permissions, are the reasons it's necessary and the benefits to the user explained? (More info: The Right Ways to Ask Users for Permissions)		

Dialogs / Modals

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Direct Does the headline ask a single, clear question or communicate a single concise message?		
Distinct Does the primary button text state an unambiguous action and indicate what happens on-click?		
Explanatory Does the body text clarify any consequences and explain options in simple terms?		

Dashboards

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Apparent Is the info presented with appropriate visual emphasis so that important statistics, charts, and recommended actions stand out?		
Grouped Is the data clearly and logically grouped and labeled?		
Intuitive Is it easy for novice and advanced users alike to interpret data visualizations based on the headings, labels, and captions?		
Inclusive Are complex concepts or industry terms explained with tooltips or linked help articles for unfamiliar users?		
Prioritized Is it clear which dashboard actions are mandatory, recommended, or strictly optional?		
Evident Are the sources of aggregated data accessible to users who want to explore details or better understand impact at the source?		

Empty States

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Positive Does the message focus on user benefit and encourage progress toward a user goal?		
Explicit Does the text explain exactly what action the user can take to fill the empty state?		
Holistic Do the images and messaging complement each other and meet brand and tone guidelines?		
Indicative Does the empty state provide the user with an indication of the data, info, or visual that will eventually occupy the space?		

Forms

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Logical Are similar fields grouped together into sections? (More info: How Chunking Helps Content Processing)		
Clear Are fields and sections clearly and consistently labeled in language that's easy for anyone to understand?		
Unique Viewed together as pairs, do the field labels and hint text avoid redundancy and serve separate, unique purposes?		
Helpful Does hint text prevent errors by providing an example or instructions for complex formatting?		
Proactive Are tooltips added next to any field label where users need more info or reassurance?		
Validating Are field and data validation errors meaningfully focused on guiding users and correcting inputs?		

Transactional Emails

CONTENT HEURISTIC	YES?	WHAT TO FIX
Front-loaded Is the most important idea or required action obvious from the main email heading?		
Pertinent Does the email content get directly to the point? Is it obvious what the user needs to do and how they need to respond?		
Essential Is every sentence of the body text necessary and is every bit of info meaningful to users?		
Concise Is the subject line short (about 40 characters) and is any required action or urgency clear to users?		

UX CONTENT COLLECTIVE

Friendly Is the tone of the email content respectful, easy to understand, positive and solution-oriented?		
Readable Is the body text short and scannable with useful subheadings?		
Actionable Are step-by-step instructions thorough and clear? Is the CTA easy to find and positioned near the top of the email?		
Consistent Do the terms in the email match those used in the interface, in the support content or articles, and those preferred by users?		
Informative Does the email tell users how to get more info, share feedback, or contact someone for more help?		