intruder   Tone of Voice

This is a (fairly) brief overview of how we write. It's for everyone in the team, and it applies to all the writing we do, inside and out.

Together with our visual identity, our messaging tone of voice helps set us apart in a crowded digital and cybersecurity landscape. It's not just what we say, it's how we say it that grabs attention and credibility. Especially today, when we have just 15 seconds to make an impression.

Tone of voice is also about being consistent. Consistency shows that we are a reliable and trustworthy partner, that every part of their experience with us will be equally good. Even 404 errors are an opportunity to build trust if we get them right.

Personality

> We are a modern cyber security company that is influenced by retro gaming culture. We know what we do, and we stay in our lane. Our style is professional but playful; customers know we take things seriously but aren't afraid to have a bit of fun while we do it.

Brand traits

- Honest, but don't overshare
- Approachable, but not casual
- Clever, but not complicated
- Eager, but not annoying
- Playful, but not childish
- Nostalgic, but not living in the past
- Cutting-edge, but not corporate

What does this mean in practice?

- **We're honest**

We understand our customers live in a world of complex cyber security threats, needs, solutions and language. Customers trust us to simplify this complexity, because they have better things to do.

- **We're genuine**

We get business, because we are one. We understand what keeps them up at night. We help them overcome these pain points, and speak to them in a familiar and accessible way.

- **We're experts**

We make difficult look easy. It's our job to demystify cybersecurity and make it easy for customers to secure their IT. We avoid technical jargon to make vulnerability management easier to understand.

- **We don't take ourselves too seriously**

We're clever but easy going. Our sense of humour is dry and inclusive. We're never condescending or patronising. But we're not wacky. It's easy for chatty to become cringeworthy or sound insincere.

We apply these brand traits to everything we communicate: web, emails, guides, help articles, customer interactions, social, and internal communications.

Voice

We know that cybersecurity is a minefield of confusing terminology. That's why we talk like the experienced and understanding partner customers need. We help them without patronising or confusing them.

Our voice is conversational, because we want to make our customers feel comfortable, and their working lives easier. We are bold and brave, but we prefer subtle over noisy.

Whether people know what they need, or don't know the first thing about vulnerability scanning, everything we say should **inform and encourage**.

We believe everyone deserves the same service and level of protection, so we share our expertise with **empathy and equality**.

So how do we write in an **active, personal and reliable** way? The best test for this is to read what you've written out loud. Does it sound like the kind of thing you'd actually say? Here's an example of how not to do it:

> *Thanks for picking me! I'm your new vulnerability scanner. The people here at Intruder designed me using the latest technologies to be as easy to set up as 1-2-3... So, come on, let's get started. Scan happy!*

Urgh. This is much better:

> *Welcome to Intruder. Now you've signed up for a trial, you may be wondering: what happens next? Simplicity is at the core of Intruder but if you need a helping hand to get started, here's a quick guide to get you up and running as soon as possible.*

Tone

Our voice is constant, regardless of who we're talking to or what we're saying. But we adapt our **tone** - from serious and technical to sympathetic and humorous - to fit the context and the customer. Use the active voice, stay positive, keep it short, be clear:

- **Get to the point.** Start with the key takeaway. Put the most important thing in the most noticeable spot. Make choices and next steps obvious. Give people just enough information to make decisions confidently. Don't get in the way.
- **Talk like a person.** Choose optimistic, conversational language. Use short everyday words, contractions, and sentence-style capitalization. Avoid jargon and acronyms where possible. Don't miss an opportunity to find a better word.
- **Simple is better.** Everyone likes clarity and getting to the point. Break it up. Step it out. Short sentences are easier to scan and read. Edit every excess word.
- **Avoid FUD (fear, uncertainty, doubt)**. Cyber security relies on fear to drive business. We do things differently. We provide a *positive* service, which is reflected in our messaging. We help customers be successful by solving one of their key challenges – keeping their digital assets safe (even if they don't know they need it).

Why we use US English

As most of our customers are based in the US, we use US English. This goes beyond simple spelling to include grammar and vocabulary. For example Americans say 'custom' instead of 'bespoke.'

A useful list of US vocabulary can be found here, while grammar differences are detailed here. As a general rule, US English is spelt how it sounds. Here are some common examples:

UK English words ending in *'our'* usually end in *'or'* in US English:

UK	US
colour	color

Verbs in UK English spelled *'ise'* at the end are spelled with *'ize'* in US English:

UK	US
organise	organize

Verbs in UK English that end in *'yse'* are always spelled *'yze'* in US English:

UK	US
analyse	analyze

In US spelling there's only one 'L' in verbs ending in a vowel plus 'L'

UK	US
travelled	traveled

UK English words that are spelled with the double vowels *ae* or *oe* tend to be spelled with an *e* in US English

UK	US
manoeuvre	maneuver

Nouns that end with *'ence'* in UK English are spelled *'ense* in US English:

UK	US
defence	defense
licence	license

Some nouns that end with *'ogue'* in UK English end with either *'og'* or *'ogue* in US English:

UK	US
analogue	analog **or** analogue

Vocabulary and grammar

Abbreviations and acronyms

Spell it out the first time you mention it. Then use the short version for all other references. If the abbreviation isn't clearly related to the full version, specify in parentheses. Avoid using ampersands unless it's a specific product or brand name.

First use: Network Operations Centre

Second use: NOC

First use: Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC)

Second use: UTC

If the abbreviation or acronym is well known, like API or HTML, use it instead and don't worry about spelling it out.

Active voice

Use active voice. Avoid passive voice. In active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action. In passive voice, the subject of the sentence has the action done to it.

- Active: The user logged into the account.
- Passive: The account was logged into by the customer.

Words like "was" and "by" shows you're writing in passive voice. One exception is when you want to emphasise the action over the subject, like "Your account was flagged by our security team"

Capitalisation

Only capitalise the first letter of the first word, even in titles/headers. When writing out an email address or website URL, use all lowercase. Within body copy, only use uppercase for proper nouns/brand names like Intruder or Cloudflare. Avoid elsewhere.

Contractions

They're great! They give your writing an informal, friendly tone.

Custom

As per US English, use 'custom' instead of 'bespoke'

Cybersecurity

One word

Emoji

Emoji are a fun way to add humour and visual interest to copy but only use them in social posts, infrequently, and deliberately.

Exclamation marks

If your content is good, you shouldn't need them to create excitement!!!

Numbers

Spell out a number when it begins a sentence. Otherwise, use the numerals

- Ten new employees started on Monday, and 12 start next week.
- I ate 3 donuts at Coffee Hour.
- We hosted a group of 8 interns who are learning to code.

Sometimes it feels weird to use the numeral. If it's an expression that typically uses spelled-out numbers, leave them that way.

- A friendly welcome email can help you make a great first impression.
- This is a third-party integration.
- Put your best foot forward with the all-in-one platform that grows with you.
- After you send your newsletter, Greg will give you a high-five.

Numbers over 3 digits get commas:

- 999
- 1,000
- 150,000

Write out big numbers in full: 150,000. Abbreviate them if there are space restraints, as in a tweet or a chart: 1k.

Dates

Spell out the day of the week and the month. Abbreviate only if space is an issue in an email, social post or guide: 24th January, Jan 24.

Decimals and fractions

Spell out fractions.

Yes: two-thirds

No: 2/3

Use decimal points when a number can't be easily written out as a fraction, like 1.375 or 47.2.

Percentages

Use the % symbol instead of spelling out "percent".

Ranges and spans

Use a hyphen (-) to indicate a range or span of numbers.

It takes 20-30 days.

Money

When writing about US, Euro or UK currency, use the currency sign before the amount. Include a decimal and number if more than 0.

£3

$20

€19.99

Telephone numbers

Use a country code if the copy is for readers in various countries.

+44 7790 021223

Time

Use numerals and am or pm, with no space in-between. Don't use minutes for on-the-hour time.

7am

7:30pm

Use a hyphen between times to indicate a time period.

7am-10:30pm

Specify time zones when writing about an event or something else people would need to schedule like a webinar. Abbreviate time zones as follows:

Central Standard Time: CST

UK time: GMT/BST

US Eastern time: ET

US Central time: CT

US Mountain time: MT

US Pacific time: PT

Central European Time: CET

Abbreviate decades when referring to those within the past 100 years: the 00s, the 90s

Quotes

When quoting someone in a blog post or other content, use the present tense.

"Using Intruder has kept our business secure," says James Smith.

Names and titles

The first time you mention a person, refer to them by their first and last names. Afterwards refer to them by their first name.

Capitalise the names of departments and teams (but not the word 'team' or 'department').

- DevOps team
- Customer Success department

Capitalise individual job titles when referencing to a specific role. Don't capitalise when referring to the role in general terms.

- Our new Product Lead starts today
- All the managers are in a meeting

Feel free to refer to colleagues as a "ninja," "rockstar," or "wizard" internally, but avoid using externally - unless they literally are one.

URLs and websites

Capitalise the names of websites, web publications and journals. Don't italicise.

Avoid spelling out URLs, but when you need to, leave off the http://www – it's not 2005.

Writing about other companies

Use companies' own names. Go by what's used on their official website.

snyk

OWASP

Nessus

Companies are always singular: "it" not "they"

Slang and jargon

Write in plain English and avoid unnecessary jargon where possible, but we operate in a technological space and technical language shows expertise and builds trust. But be aware that it can alienate some readers, so always write for your audience. If you need to use a technical term, briefly define it so everyone can understand.

- Intruder's Product team is constantly enhancing our service to make sure users have a seamless experience. One way we do this is through integrations with all

the SaaS and cloud services you already use in your day-to day business life.

Trademark symbols

There is no legal requirement to include trademarks, so only use a TM or ® symbol with the first instance of the brand name or mark. Overuse creates visual clutter.

Use 2nd or 3rd person

Customers don't care about us, they care about what we can do for them, so avoid using 'we'; instead write as if you're having a conversation, using 'you' or 'he/she/them' wherever possible.

Finally, write positively

Use positive language rather than negative language. One way to detect negative language is to look for words like "can't," "don't," etc.

Yes: Try a vulnerability scanner to secure your systems

No: You can't secure your systems if you don't try a vulnerability scanner