

Boxes and Arrows

Writing

Guidelines

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Overview

With every article we publish, we aim to:

- **Educate:** We can learn from each other's expertise and experiences.
- **Inspire:** Your expertise and passion motivate others in their work. Use an active voice rather than a passive voice to engage and inform readers.
- **Share:** We are a community that supports collaboration. Spreading best practices is vital to maintaining the growth of our profession.

To achieve these goals, we ensure our content is:

- **Clear:** Use simple words and sentences. Understand the topic you're writing about.
- **Focused:** Start with the most important content in sentences, paragraphs, sections, and pages. Provide contextual examples.
- **Inclusive:** Be considerate of all of our readers who reflect the world at large. Please write consciously to include everyone.

"Stories should be clearly written and fearlessly informative"

Here are the five qualities we look for when evaluating what to publish:

1. **Expertise:** You do not need to be well-known to write an article for us, but you must know a lot about the subject you're writing about.
2. **Evidence:** Aside from knowing your subject deeply, you have to prove it to the reader. Referring to supporting research or describing relevant examples are good ways to do this. If you have interesting data, we would like to see it.
3. **Originality:** We are constantly looking for new ideas and topics. If you are writing about a well-worn topic, we will be looking for a unique insight or a value-add.

4. **Usefulness:** Our readers look to us to stay on top of new developments and ways of thinking. If you explain your thinking so the reader understands how to apply it in a real situation that will make it more powerful.
 5. **Informative and a pleasure to read:** Our readers are busy, so we hope our articles capture their interest right away and provide takeaways that they can use.
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Accessibility

The four principles of accessible content are:

1. Perceivable
2. Operable
3. Understandable
4. Robust

If you are not familiar with writing for web accessibility, please visit the World Wide Web Consortium's [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#). [[↗]]

Audience

Our readers range from entry-level IA and UX practitioners to some of the first web designers who speak at conferences worldwide. This is a broad audience, and we ask that you keep in mind the diversity in years of experience and specializations.

Increasingly, our audience also includes professionals from related practices whose work is closely tied to ours such as content strategists, taxonomists, product designers and program, product and project managers. They may not have much first-hand experience in the field.

Copyright

At the bottom of every page of our website, we include a notice that all rights are reserved: "Boxes and Arrows LLC 2001-2021 | All Rights Reserved". We also respect the copyrighted work of other creators. Some creators choose to make their work available for public use if the proper credit is given. Please visit the [Creative Commons website](#) [[↗]] to learn more.

Authors who use an image or photo made by someone else, please get permission first. As a courtesy, please give the copyright owner credit and include the original source. We recommend the free, high-res images available at [Unsplash](#). [[↗]]

Grammar and Mechanics

House guidelines for style, usage and grammar keep our online content clear and consistent. Our preferred reference is [The Chicago Manual of Style](#). [[↗] optional: show external link]

Acronyms and Initialisms

Generally, it's a safe bet to use common abbreviations without spelling them out. (See examples below.) For less common terms spell them out the first time they are used then use the short version for all subsequent references.

- IA
- UX
- HTML
- JPEG
- e.g.
- i.e.
- a.m., p.m.

Italics

Use italics and headline-style capitalization when referencing the title of a long work such as a book, movie or YouTube video or when referencing UI elements and navigation labels in step-by-step instructions. Examples:

- *The Design Thinking Playbook*
- When you're all done, click *Send*.

Names and Titles

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

Capitalize the names of departments and teams but not the word "team" or "department".

Capitalize individual job titles when referencing a specific role or prior to an individual's first and last name. Do not capitalize when referring to the role in general terms.

- Our lead UX Designer starts today.
- Copywriter Sara Anderson has twenty years of corporate-side experience.
- All designers are encouraged to introduce themselves.

Numbers

Follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* that advises spelling out whole numbers from zero through one hundred.

Pronouns

Use the correct pronouns when substituting for an earlier noun used in your content. If the gender is unknown, use the singular “they” as the pronoun.

Punctuation

- One space after comma
 - Oxford commas
-

Images

An image calls attention to articles. However, too many inline content images can be a distraction unless they provide additional context to the material.

Please exercise discretion and submit images in line with the following requirements:

- JPEG or PNG images optimized for the web
 - Feature images, 850 x 550 pixel minimum
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Jargon and Slang

Please write in plain English, bearing in mind that readers may not be as familiar with a topic or terms you use as you are. Readers are often seeking our authors’ research and expertise for guidance.

When using a technical term, briefly define it so every reader understands.

Source Materials

It is important to cite sources you use in your articles for a variety of reasons:

- to show your reader you've done the proper research,
- to avoid plagiarism by quoting words and ideas used by other authors,
- to allow readers to track down the sources, and
- to be a responsible writer by giving credit to others and acknowledging their data or research.

Citing a source identifies a published work with as many details as possible, so the book, article, chapter or website can be easily retrieved. Standard elements include the following:

- author name(s)
- titles of books, articles, and journals
- date of publication
- page numbers
- volume and issue numbers
- website URLs

You must cite:

- Facts, figures, ideas, or other information that is not common knowledge
- Ideas, words, theories, or exact language that another person used in other publications
- Images where you do not hold the copyright unless it is a public domain image, you have explicit permission granted by the license holder or the use of the image is covered by a [Creative Commons](#) [↗ optional: show external link] license

When in doubt, cite your source!

Tone

Be professional, but not mechanical.

A sense of humor is okay, but forced humor or silliness are not.

Be sensitive. One cannot predict the frame of mind of the reader.

Look for simple ways to communicate information without overly complicated or intimidating language.

Help people understand why they should do something, not just how.

Break down complicated tasks into steps.

Voice

Our voice is a reflection of who we are, and so is yours. We respect that each writer has their own voice, too, and while we encourage your definitive style within your pieces we ask that you do so in keeping with our mission to **educate, inspire and share.**