
2021–2022 Tone of Voice Guide

Tone of Voice Explorations



Tone & Voice Definitions



Q: What's a brand **voice**?

A: It's a **distinct personality** that a brand exudes in its messaging. **A voice is defined by a brand's ethics, persona, and aspirations;** these elements join together in solidarity, resulting in **one dynamic voice** that "speaks" distinctly across multiple platforms to multiple audiences.



Quick tip: A brand has one voice. Like any strong personality, it does not waver or wobble — if there are consistent and clear elements to a brand voice, then a brand has found its rightful one.

Q: What is a brand **tone**?

A: It's how the voice of a brand **expresses** itself. A tone is defined by a brand's audience, which includes multiple components and qualities. A tone is developed to engage and converse with varying audiences... just as you take your tone into consideration when you speak to different people, a business must do the same — in a unanimous voice — taking multiple audiences and priorities into account.



Quick tip: A brand has multiple attributes that create one tone. Like any dynamic personality, a tone adapts to audiences yet always complements the persona (the voice). If there are consistent audience engagement and understanding, a brand has found its rightful tone.

Tone of Voice Explorations



B2B. B2C. B2G.

Relatable. Confident. Curious.



Tone of Voice Explorations



Relatable



We are relatable. What is a relatable tone?

We meet people where they are: our readers have real-life responsibilities, stressors, and goals. We are sensitive to differences in age, race, education, socioeconomics, gender, and professional stature. **No matter the content or audience, we sound relatable — we strive to engage all people.**

Relatable Truths

- 1. **We genuinely care about ALL people.** DEI is a foundational part of our DNA.*
- 2. We want to be respected by our peers, partners, and audiences — **we always speak respectfully.***
- 3. We aren't robots — We understand people.. **We connect with people, not talk at them.***

Relatable Falsehoods

- 1. We understand how to tackle all personal/professional problems — we understand **EVERYONE.***
- 2. We are all the same people with the same experiences and goals.*
- 3. Everyone understands what we are saying, so let's just stick to the factual terms and figures.*

GA's *Relatable* Tones in Action

B2B:



Drive growth
that begins from within.

Your existing talent is a powerful asset to grow.
General Assembly Enterprise upskills and reskills
teams to enable your business's digital transformation.

The advertisement features a grid of eight diverse individuals' faces, representing the talent mentioned in the text.

B2C:



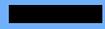
LEARN
GIVE
GROW

We'll donate \$1 USD for every person who joins us on Fridays for classes.
Classes are free and for everyone, so invite your friends, family, and loved ones.*

The advertisement includes the logos for General Assembly and Recurve.



Tone of Voice Explorations



Relatable: The GA Wink



The GA Wink

What is the GA wink? It's our swagger — and an acknowledgment or conversation starter that's designed to incite a smile. It's amusing but not inappropriate. Winks fall under our relatable tone and express our need to have fun + connect, which means different things to different people. So, when inspired to wink, please adhere to these guidelines:

- No jokes or innuendos about age, race, sex, gender, religion, culture, socioeconomics, bodily humor, disabilities (mental or physical), etc.
- No generation-specific nods or jokes: *Ok, Boomer. Take a seat, kids.*
- No political nods.
- No cursing. No special-character cursing.



See [slide 24](#) for additional context and [slide 27](#) for a link to our DEI terms.

Winky Words That Come to Mind

So, those are all the ground rules. But, what are the first words that come to mind, when we think about "The Wink":

Real-Talk

Pssst

Wink/Nod

Wry

Edgy

Swagger

Fun

Spirited

Relevant



See [slide 24](#) for additional context and [slide 27](#) for a link to our DEI terms.

Why wink, really?

The wink is a way to let others in — a way to be inclusive. It also frames our services — which can be technical and intimidating — in a relevant, human, and accessible way. Winking works best when it ties back to our expertise, otherwise, it can feel forced. Audiences will remember how it made them feel — and that positive association has long-term value. Here are some content topics to feature the wink:

- Tech
- Education
- Business
- Career Development



See [slide 24](#) for additional context and [slide 27](#) for a link to our DEI terms.

Where We Get Winky

With the right amount of measure, we can wink at all audiences. Our challenge is to balance playful, organic human emotion with thought-leading information and expertise. Here are some platforms to feature it:

- Social
- Emails
- Blog Posts, White Papers (Long-Form)
- Lander/Homepage (Heds/Tags)
- All Audiences — Various Volumes



See [slide 24](#) for additional context and [slide 27](#) for a link to our DEI terms.

The Social Wink: Relating to the Audience

The social wink has the most volume. Here are examples, specifically relating our work to the individual human experience — of every audience.

Theresa Aristomene · 2nd
Coach & Facilitator | IO Psychology | HR/People Ops | DEI
Tw · Edited · 📎

If you get on a zoom call with me, please don't apologize for the kids in the background, eating, or doing anything that makes you a [#HumanBeing](#).

Happy Friday!

[#WorkingFromHome](#)

generalassembly · Following ...

generalassembly · We don't know who needs to see this but being human is not a fault! 🥰
24w

generalassembly · #HappyFriday #TakeABreak #BeHuman #LifeAtGA
24w Reply

developingnoire · #UnapologeticallyHuman 💜
24w 2 likes Reply

darealchriskeyz · So true!!! Let me burp my babies pleeese lol

Liked by [rosie.oregan](#) and 614 others
MARCH 19

Add a comment... Post

Landing work you love starts with...

- “I can bring this to life.” → CODING
- “I need to see the big picture.” → PRODUCT MANAGEMENT
- “There has to be a pattern here.” → DATA ANALYTICS
- “I bet there’s a hidden opportunity somewhere.” → DATA SCIENCE
- “I think I can make this work better.” → UX DESIGN
- “I know what would get their attention.” → DIGITAL MARKETING

generalassembly · Following ...

generalassembly · Big careers begin with simple ideas. Whether you're a big-picture thinker (looking at you, PMs!) or a life-hack enthusiast, our Landing Work You Love tech career guide offers insight into the most in-demand roles in the industry, what they actually do, and — most importantly — how to land one for yourself.

See which one aligns with your interests and instincts at the [link in bio!](#) #GAat10
6w

expressive0 🙌
6w Reply

Liked by [rosie.oregan](#) and 766 others
JULY 26

Add a comment... Post



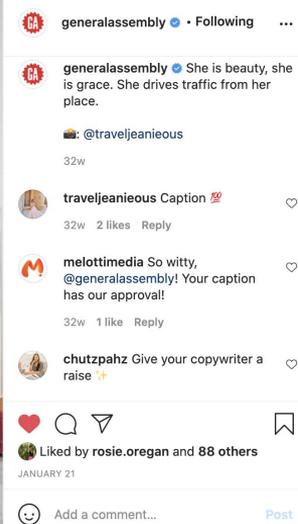
The Social Wink: *Relate to Industry*

The social wink can also relate to the industry at large, a specific discipline, or how our audience works or engages with the tech industry — audience aside.



General Assembly
@GA

Interviewer: What is hoisting?
You: In my previous role aboard The Flying Dutchman, I—
Please. Review **before** the interview. ga.co/3yF4IbD



The B2C Wink

Short-form calls for punchier winks. Long-form has more room, so winks can be wry or measured. **Note:** A blog post full of winks is exhaustive or potentially, immature, so tread more lightly in B2C narrative storytelling vs. B2C social.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Skills last a lifetime.
Your payment plan should not.

REDESIGN YOUR CAREER

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Get the Tech Out of Here!

SIGN UP

Wink/Nod

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Break the Mold, Not the Bank

Payment Plans That Pay Off

Apply for a 0%-interest, \$0-fee loan for our online evening or 1-week courses.

Wry

Take {Remote} Control of Your Holiday.

Online learning + \$250 workshop credit!

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LEARN MORE

Hey, you up?

On Demand UX design skills anytime, anywhere.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LEARN MORE

UX Design

5. USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN

It starts with... I think I can make this work better.

The Gist. Scrolling through an app? That's user experience (UX). The layout of a museum? That's UX, too. UX focuses on the interaction between a user and a product — both digital and physical. UX designers put themselves in the users' shoes: *What do they want, and how can I help them get it?* With a mix of research, information architecture, and graphic design, the answers will result in delightful experiences that meet user needs. Part-detective, part-artist, the insights you glean from user interviews, wireframes, and prototypes will inform the design choices and experiences you make.

UX design spans private and public sectors — basically any industry that requires a website — with responsibilities varying position-to-position. Lucky for our students, they leave our courses prepared and fully equipped to handle any UX job.

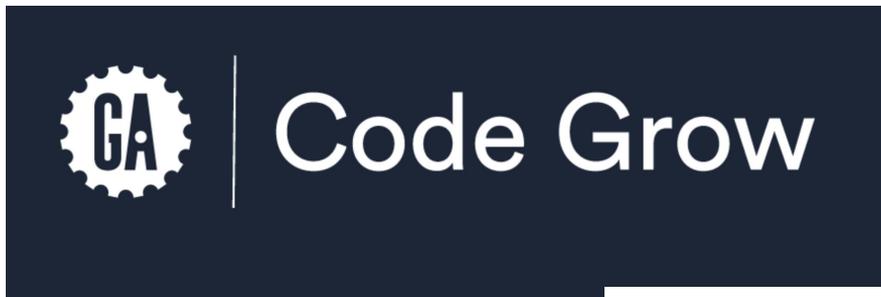
If you're a natural problem solver with an eye for detail — and another for perspective — then you already have the makings of a successful UX designer.

Landing Work You Love: A Tech Career Guide

GA

The B2G Wink

*Our global wink needs to be translatable and mild. **Note:** B2G winks are global and must be sensitive to global cultural nuances, regardless of platform or content.*



Our Inspiring Community

It doesn't take a village, but it does take a classroom.

Our Social Impact

Innovation is inclusive — learning opportunities should be too.



See [slide 24](#) for additional context and [slide 27](#) for a link to our DEI terms.



The B2B Wink

*Our business partners are human, of course, but what winks well on a social platform, will not fair the same in a whitepaper built for execs. **This wink is nothing less than professional — it is our most subtle of all.** Note: In abbreviated/conversion-centric content (butter bars, webinar cards, et al.), the wink may not be useful, clear, or appropriate.*

What to ask, when to ask.

Getting real with how product-centric your business is, is an important first step. But what do you do if you realize that the questions you're asking aren't as sharp as they could be, or are being delivered in the wrong forums? Check out our recommendations for what to do in each category below:



See [slide 24](#) for additional context and [slide 27](#) for a link to our DEI terms.

Tone of Voice Explorations



Confident



We are confident. What is a confident tone?

Instead of vagueries or lofty narratives, our confident tone is conveyed through concise wording and compelling calls to action; **our confidence is acquired through experience, not ego. No matter the content or audience, we sound assured, never arrogant. (Confident.)**

Confident Truths

- 1. We are pioneers and leaders in tech education; **our experience gives us confidence.***
- 2. Our recommendations are precise, practical, and trustworthy — **we stand behind what we say + we do what we say.***
- 3. **We invest and grow global businesses and individual careers.** Affirming testimonials can be found in our Outcomes report, business impact reporting, and throughout our global communities.*

Confident Falsehoods

- 1. Since we're pioneers, we know all the answers and can guarantee bulletproof success.*
- 2. Our readers like it when we brag and throw our intelligence and jargon around — people feel assured by our boss-like power.*
- 3. Since we have achieved growth in so many ways with so many people, we can coast on positive feedback and past results.*

GA's *Confident* Tones in Action

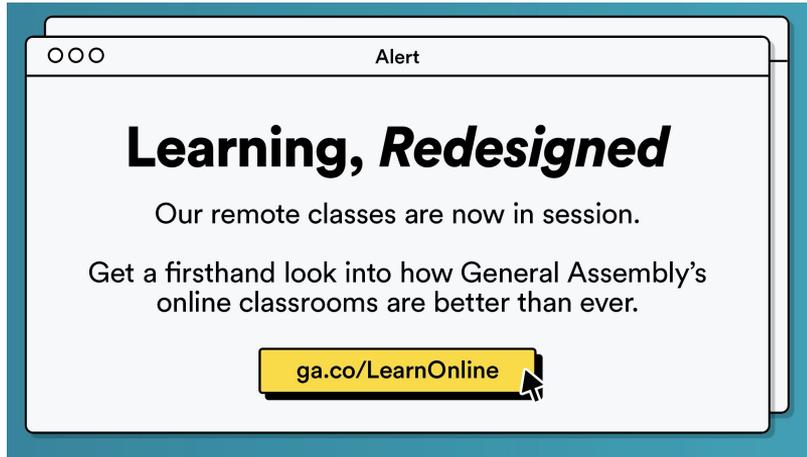
B2B:

EXPERT FACILITATION

Our Instructors Are Experts at Teaching Online

Our global network of top-notch instructors are deeply skilled at remote facilitation. In fact, we've trained other learning organizations on ways to engage students and nurture their success online.

B2C:



GA's Confident Tones in Action

Social:

General Assembly @GA

Last time we checked, it takes skills to do the job — not a title.

Learn more on how GA can help your organization's transformational goals: ga.co/3DbSERL #DigitalSkills #Upskilling #Reskilling

TIRED
Hiring candidates based on their **work history.**

OR

Hiring candidates based on their **skills.**
WIRED

We Don't Mean to Flex But...

280K+ RSVPs

50+ WORKSHOPS

1 FINAL WEEK

generalassembly • Following

generalassembly The energy, drive, and spirit that our community brought to Free Fridays has been nothing short of inspirational. Thank you for showing up and showing out in more than 50 workshops during some of the most challenging weeks we may ever see — but we're not done just yet! Join us this week for one final round of Free Fridays workshops. Save your spot in the link in our bio, and we'll see you online!

62w

dianacaragan @generalassembly the workshops are awesome, keep it comin'!

62w 1 like Reply

2,997 views

JUNE 25, 2020



Tone of Voice Explorations



Curious



We are curious. What is a curious tone?

Knowledge is how we pave our path forward. We always strive to learn something new — about our audiences and the industry at-large. **Our curiosity is built from a genuine love of learning, and it should encourage others to feel the same. No matter the content or audience, we sound curious — we take pride in asking Qs.**

Curious Truths

- 1. We are as open to new information and innovation as we ask readers to be.*
- 2. We are future-focused, equipping learners with the tools they need to keep evolving outside the classroom.*
- 3. We are introspective and actively seek feedback — we ask questions and admit when we are uninformed.*

Curious Falsehoods

- 1. We never challenge the status quo or ask Qs — why rock the boat or appear insecure?*
- 2. We anticipate every skill that every learner needs — nothing ever needs to be evolved, challenged, or changed.*
- 3. Our instincts are always right — we never need to explain or reevaluate. Qs are for amateurs.*

GA's *Curious* Tones in Action

B2B:

Board members agree that, while machine learning and automated tools have the potential to drive better business decision-making, the No. 1 barrier to adoption is an organization's inability to identify and implement artificial intelligence into its business model. This begs the question: **How do you transform a business model?**

It starts by taking a look at your workforce strategy.

B2C:

Narrator Q: But... What's better than free?

Chorus A: Learning!

Chorus Voice 1: Dataset pattern predictions...

Chorus Voice 2: ...and how to empower that curious mind of yours!

Narrator Q: What's better than free?

Chorus A: Giving!

Chorus Voice 1: New skill workshops for friends and family...

Chorus Voice 2: ...and a helping hand to global communities.

Narrator Q: What's better than free?

Chorus A: Growing!

Chorus Voice 1: In new, amazing ways...

Chorus Voice 2: both professionally...

Chorus Voice 3: ...and personally.



GA's Curious Tones in Action

Social:

NAME THAT SONG!

1. 🍑 🍑 🍑
2. 🧑‍🚀 🌊
3. ☀️ ⚡
4. 🚪 🙌
5. 🚗 🏠 😭
6. 💋 📈 +
7. 🗣️ 🌙 ⭐ 🌌
8. 👍 📞 🐱
9. 🥰 ➡️ 💔 🙌 😬
10. 👧 👦 🚲 🗑️ ⚡

#WORLD EMOJI DAY



generalassembly • Following ...



generalassembly We're celebrating #WorldEmojiDay with our favorite summer bops! Can you guess the song title from the clues? Shoot your shot in the comments. They're ordered easiest to hardest, so if you get stuck, check your answers at the [link in bio](#)!

As always, wrong answers are also encouraged. 😊

7w



generalassembly #WorldEmojiDay #Emoji #EmojiInTheWild

7w 1 like Reply



Liked by rosie.oregan and 149 others

JULY 17



Add a comment...

Post



Sound Check: Human. Confident. Curious.

Human

We're empathetic to the reader and have conversations, no matter the audience. While we meet our readers where they are (B2B CEO or Gen Z student), **GA relays information in a *human* manner.**

Confident

We are never autocratic, arrogant, or stuffy. While we are leaders and pioneers in the EdTech space, we are always open to being wrong and learning more. **GA assures readers through honest *confidence*.**

Curious

As an education company, The Why is always on our minds, and the curious mind never rests. We use a loopback system — every question we ask is to give our students and business partners the answers that define new GA generations. **GA engages audiences with our *curiosity*.**

Tone of Voice Explorations



Technical Writing Best Practices: Web & SEO*



GA's Best Practices for Web & Mobile

1. **Use short sentences and paragraphs.** The ideal standard is no more than 20 words per sentence, five sentences per paragraph.
2. **Well, be *mobile*-first.** Consider the amount of content and how it will fit on *mobile* devices. Too much copy will feel overwhelming on any device.
3. **Chunk your content.** Chunking makes your content more scannable by breaking it into manageable sections.
4. **Use bullets and numbered lists.** Don't limit yourself to using this for long lists — one sentence and two bullets are easier to read than three sentences.
5. **Front-load the important information.** Use the journalism model of the “inverted pyramid.” Start with the content that is most important to your audience, and then provide additional details.
6. **Be direct and data-driven.** While we keep our brand and tones top of mind, we must note that concise, data-driven messaging seems to be performing best on the web — especially on more service-driven assets (landing pages, etc.).



GA's *SEO* Best Writing Practices: TK

:



Tone of Voice Explorations



10 Rules To Write By



1. Speak in the Second-Person Voice

Get personal, but never autobiographical. Address readers as “you” and communicate on behalf of GA with “we,” “our,” and “us.”



If **you** are interested in learning more about GA’s financing options, contact **our** Admissions team.



Students who are interested in learning more about GA’s financing options can contact its Admissions team.

2. Emphasize Action

Live in the present! Be actionable. Use imperative statements, CTAs, and watch out for passive ("-ed") construction — sometimes it's unavoidable, but be aware.



Email us at enterprise@ga.co.



We can be contacted by email at enterprise@ga.co.

3. Provide Context

"Yes, and...?" Never assume anything about your readers. Include the appropriate titles *and* the descriptors for all companies, technical concepts, experts, terms, acronyms, etc.



A study by the content marketers at BuzzSumo...



Introduction to Structured Query Language (SQL)



A study by BuzzSumo...



Introduction to SQL



4. Show, Don't Tell

Be seen, not (just) heard. Highlight the General Assembly's network and industry validation scale, then step back and allow these figures to speak for themselves.



300+

Enterprise clients globally.

25k+

Employees trained in our corporate programs.

40+

Fortune 100 clients.



Everyone is talking about our global impact.

5. Ditch the Jargon

("I don't know what that means...") Be clear and precise about what you want readers to know and assume they may not know any of it...



Help teams leverage fast-changing technologies to better collaborate and deliver real business value.



Help teams develop synergy.

6. Skip the Hyperbole

Don't stretch the truth. Avoid using adjectives like fabulous, phenomenal, marvelous, and all platitudes **that ring false** and sound... sarcastic or silly.



Well done! You've successfully uploaded your unit project.



You've successfully downloaded the study guide — unbelievable!

7. Avoid the Cringe

When in doubt, don't. Stereotypes, bodily humor, violent imagery, and profanity are never appropriate. (We are friendly, but we are not friends with our audience, so we should never speak too casually or carelessly.)



One of the amazing perks of a GA workshop? You'll hear advice you won't hear anywhere else. And the stories? Get ready for those...



Ask questions — nothing too cheeky 🍑🍑 — that allow you to get settled. Who cares if you feel stupid or f*ck up — we give no 🍌s!



See the easy rework of the below at the top. We keep it clean, clear, and professional — with an appropriate wink.

8. All About Them

How can we help you, reader? Center readers in the storyline by concentrating on their benefits, not our features — i.e., “Here’s what this means for you.” Ask yourself, “Are my words providing value to the reader?”



We understand, your time is limited: A full-time career is a priority that competes with the rigor of a full-time GA Immersive course. We can help you figure it all out...



Our award-winning Immersive courses make us leaders in tech.

9. Don't Wrap It Up or Repeat

Say more with less — and don't say anything twice. There's nothing worse than a workshop title, headline, subject line, or CTA that is so long that it wraps — ask yourself if those inevitably wrapping/repeating words are worth it. Speak with impact — and economy.



**CAREER CAMP |
LET YOUR DIVERSITY
STAND OUT | ONLINE**



**CAREER CAMP | STAND OUT BY
STANDING OUT: DIVERSITY IN
THE WORKPLACE | ONLINE**



See the easy rework of the below at the top. We extracted the essential information, while keeping in mind the awkward structure of the workshop title field on our site.

10. You're Part of a Global Community

Become worldly. Idioms and slang that may resonate with some members of our global community but be lost or, even worse, insult others.



Success is up to *you*.



Good luck!



The ball is in your court.



We're rooting for you.



Unsure about something? Check our full DEI guide [here](#) for reference.

Tone of Voice Explorations



Rules To Polish by



Clean It Up

Now that you have created gloat-worthy content, it's time to dot your i's and cross your t's. *Ugh, grammar.* Yes. Grammar.

For non-writers, grammatical nuances are likely to be unnoticed — until they're wrong. As an EdTech company, we must exude credibility, accuracy, and polish with **grammatically correct messaging**. While we are not "one of those" schools, we are a school — looking + sounding "smart" and put-together is essential and on-brand.

Please refer to our [GA Grammar Style Guide](#) and/or [GA International Grammar Guide](#) to refine your work and make it ready to face the *global* public.



—
Thank you for your time and review!