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# Why This Guide Matters

This guide is a single source of truth for UX writing for all digital products created by PPL's Experience Design team.

By following these guidelines, we reduce ambiguity and ensure our content reflects the team's core writing principles: accessibility, clarity, consistency, and empathy.

## The benefits of consistent, user-centered writing

- **Creates a cohesive experience:** Consistent language and tone across all platforms — whether for customer-facing or internal communications — ensures users experience a unified brand voice, building trust and reliability
- **Enhances understanding:** Clear, user-centered writing reduces misunderstandings and helps users quickly find the information they need, improving satisfaction and reducing the need for additional support

## How this guide supports PPL's mission and goals

- **Enhances user experiences:**
  - These guidelines help us create intuitive, user-friendly content enabling users to easily understand and interact with PPL's digital products
  - When users can quickly find the information they need and complete tasks without frustration, it increases satisfaction and builds trust in our services
- **Reinforces reliability:**
  - Consistency and clarity in our communications ensure users can rely on PPL for accurate, accessible information
  - This strengthens our role as a dependable energy provider, reducing the need for additional support and enhancing users' confidence in our systems
- **Promotes accessibility and inclusivity:**
  - By following these standards, we ensure all digital product communications are compliant with global accessibility standards
  - This demonstrates our commitment to serving all users, including those with permanent or temporary challenges, and creates a more equitable experience for everyone

# Our Core UX Writing Principles

Our UX writing principles serve as foundational guidelines and shape how we communicate with users through our digital products. This is how we create unified, positive experiences and strengthen our relationship with PPL's customers and employees. These principles help ensure our content is inclusive, clear, consistent, and responsive to our users' needs.

## Our four core principles

1. **Accessibility**

This principle guides us to create content that meets accessibility standards and is inclusive of all users, regardless of physical, cognitive, or situational factors

2. **Clarity**

Every piece of content should prioritize clear, straightforward language to ensure users can quickly grasp information and can complete tasks without confusion

3. **Consistency**

By maintaining uniformity across all digital products, we make interactions with PPL feel seamless, reliable, and trustworthy

4. **Empathy**

We write with empathy by guiding users through complex tasks with care while acknowledging factors such as financial stress, time constraints, and both temporary and permanent impairments

# Brand Language, Voice, and Tone

Brand language refers to the words, phrases, and consistent writing style we use to communicate with our audiences. It helps us connect with customers and creates a consistent, recognizable identity. Our *voice* gives the PPL brand a distinct character, while our *tone* adapts as needed to ensure our message feels relevant, relatable, and suited to the context.

## Voice guidelines

The PPL voice is consistent and confident. It’s our personality, and it always reflects our brand. Follow the PATH below to create copy aligned with the PPL voice, which is:

### EXAMPLES

<b>P</b> <b>Plainspoken</b> – Use straightforward language. Define technical terms when necessary, and provide instructions that ensure employees can efficiently complete tasks.	<b>✗</b> This unit vastly exceeds the PTC plus additional metrics. <b>✓</b> The proposed unit exceeds the PTC (price to compare).
<b>A</b> <b>Approachable</b> – Maintain professionalism while being approachable. Use contractions and conversational tone where appropriate to encourage collaboration across teams.	<b>✗</b> Proceed now and set up an employee portal . <b>✓</b> Let’s set up your employee portal.
<b>T</b> <b>Transparent</b> – Provide only the details employees need. Include clarifying details to add necessary context, or if omitting details could cause confusion or error.	<b>✗</b> A manager must approve all timesheets. <b>✓</b> A manager (or team lead) must approve your timesheet submission to ensure timely payroll processing.
<b>H</b> <b>Helpful</b> – Guide employees with clear prompts and steps. Use fewer words if the interface is simple, but ensure essential details are not left out for task completion.	<b>✗</b> See the blue link on the right. <b>✓</b> (No directional language required)

## Tone guidelines for specific channels

Tone is adaptable and allows us to tailor content to different users and situations. Each communication has a specific purpose and may require a distinct tone. Tone should shift depending on the channel while maintaining a consistent voice across all communications.

### **Web content** — Informative and accessible

Web content should be approachable and easy to read. Clear language and helpful prompts make complex topics more manageable and encourage users to continue engaging with the content. Users typically seek detailed information or solutions on the web, so the tone should be reliable and trustworthy while remaining professional.

### **Text messages / SMS** — Brief and direct

Text messages are short and to the point, with simple language providing only essential information. These messages are often read on the go, so brevity and clarity are critical to avoid overwhelming the user while ensuring the message is both understandable and actionable.

### **Transactional emails** — Professional and clear

Messages confirming transactions or actions taken or providing account updates should be precise. When necessary, include clear calls to action to guide users through the next steps in this process and give them the instructions they need to complete tasks or resolve issues. These communications should be reliable and concise.

### **Marketing emails** — Goal-oriented and engaging

Marketing messages are designed to reinforce a specific goal, often as part of a broader campaign. They should inspire engagement and interaction through inviting and encouraging language. By aligning with user needs and goals, these messages foster a sense of value and relevance while motivating action.

# Grammar, Style, and Formatting

Consistent grammar, style, and formatting help maintain consistency and clarity throughout all Experience Design-created products.

- **Plain language:** Write in a clear, straightforward manner that's easy for all users to understand. Avoid jargon, especially technical terms, unless they're necessary and explained
- **Active voice:** Favor active voice for clarity and directness. For example, use "We will contact you" rather than "You will be contacted by us"
- **Concise sentences:** Aim for short, clear sentences to improve readability. Break up complex information into manageable steps when necessary
- **Inclusive language:** Use inclusive language to acknowledge diverse backgrounds and abilities. Avoid terms that alienate or exclude certain groups

## Casing and capitalization rules

Consistency in capitalization improves readability. General guidelines include:

- **Proper nouns:** Always capitalize the names of specific places, departments, programs, product names, and brand identities (PPL Electric Utilities, Customer Support, Budget Billing)
- **Common terms:** Use sentence case for commonly used terms and categories that aren't proprietary or specific (outage information, billing assistance)
- **All caps:** Avoid using all caps, as it can feel aggressive and hinder readability

Use the correct case capitalization for each of the following page elements:

- **Main headings (H1):** Title case
- **Subheadings (H2-H6):** Sentence case
- **Body copy:** Sentence case
- **Call to Action (CTA) buttons and links:** Sentence case
- **Labels:** Sentence case
- **Eyebrow labels:** ALL CAPS

## Punctuation

Punctuation helps convey meaning clearly and consistently.

- **Period ( . ):** Use a period at the end of a complete sentence for body copy, but omit end punctuation for helper copy, labels, and bulleted list items
- **Colon ( : ):** Use a colon to introduce list items, examples, or personal information in emails
- **Serial / Oxford comma ( , , ):** Use the serial comma to separate three or more words in a list to avoid confusion
  - **Example:** “reliability, safety, and efficiency”
- **Hyphen (-):** Use hyphens to join words or parts of words to form compound terms
  - **Example:** “We offer cost-effective solutions”
- **En dash (–):** Use a closed (no space on either side) en dash to show a range of numbers, dates, or times
  - **Example:** “2:30–3 PM”
- **Em dash (—):** Use an open (spaces on both sides) em dash to emphasize a point or indicate a pause in the sentence
  - **Example:** “Energy efficiency is our focus — and our promise”
- **Parentheses ( ):** Use parentheses sparingly and primarily for introducing acronyms or abbreviations upon first reference
  - **Example:** “Rhode Island Energy (RIE) provides essential energy services”

### Do not use

- **Semicolon ( ; ):** Semicolons increase cognitive load, so opt for an em dash instead — or break the sentence into two
- **Exclamation point ( ! ):** Exclamation points do not align with PPL's tone and voice and should be avoided
- **Ampersand ( & ):** While convenient and concise, ampersands hinder web accessibility for digital screen readers and therefore should not be used
- **Ellipses ( ... ):** Avoid ellipses as they can confuse readers and disrupt sentence flow

## Numbers and units

Clear guidelines for numbers and units are essential, especially with dates, times, and measurements.

### Dates

#### Full date format: MONTH DAY, YEAR

- **When to use:** Long-form content such as emails, reports, and policy updates, or when dates need to be easily readable and unambiguous
  - **Example:** “Your payment is due by January 15, 2023.”

#### Abbreviated date format: MON DD, YYYY

- **When to use:** Notification, quick summaries, mobile views with constrained real estate, and compact layouts (such as tables) where space is limited
  - **Example:** “Jan 15, 2023 — Service interruption scheduled.”

#### Numerical date format: M/D/YYYY

- **When to use:** Internal tools or databases, forms and input fields where users are required to enter a date, and automated system-generated messages (such as error messages and account updates)
  - **Example:** “Date of service: 1/15/2023.”
- Avoid leading zeros in numerical dates to ensure clarity and minimize visual clutter
  - **Good:** 1/15/2023
  - **Avoid:** 01/15/2023

## Times

- Always capitalize AM and PM, and include a space after the number
  - **Example:** 9 AM
- To indicate a time range, use an en dash with no spaces on either side
  - **Example:** 6–8 PM
- Use "to" instead of an en dash when preceded by the words "from" or "between," and use an en dash for standalone time ranges without preceding words
  - **Correct:** "Service will be unavailable from 1 to 2 PM."
  - **Incorrect:** "Service will be unavailable from 1–2 PM."
  - **Correct:** "Service will be unavailable 1–2 PM."
- If both times fall within the same AM or PM period, include AM or PM only after the second number
  - Examples for 1 PM and 2 PM:
    - **Correct:** "Account services will be unavailable from 1 to 2 PM."
    - **Incorrect:** "Account services will be unavailable from 1 PM to 2 PM."
- If two times fall within separate AM or PM periods, mention both AM and PM after their respective times
  - Examples for 9 AM and 2 PM:
    - **Correct:** "Account services will be unavailable from 9 AM to 2 PM."
    - **Incorrect:** "Account services will be unavailable from 9 to 2 PM."
- If the time range spans multiple days, include times and dates
  - **Example:** "Account services will be unavailable from 9 PM on July 1 to 2 AM on July 2."

## Rounded hours and omitting minutes

- For rounded hours, omit ":00" to improve readability and simplicity
  - **Correct:** "Service will be unavailable from 9 AM to 5 PM."
  - **Incorrect:** "Service will be unavailable from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM."

- Include minutes only if necessary for precision
  - **Correct:** "Service will be unavailable from 9:15 AM to 10:45 PM."
  - **Incorrect:** "Service will be unavailable from 9:00 AM to 10:00 PM."
- Avoid combining rounded and precise times in a single range
  - **Correct:** "Service will be unavailable from 9:15 to 10:15 AM."
  - **Incorrect:** "Service will be unavailable from 9:00 AM to 10:15 AM."

### Phone numbers

- Use the XXX-XXX-XXXX format for phone numbers in all national use cases
- When addressing international audiences or writing international numbers, use the +1-XXX-XXX-XXXX format, which includes the country code
- Specify extensions using “ext.” followed by a space and the number
  - **Example:** XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX

### Numeral rules

- Use numerals for numbers 10 and above
  - **Example:** “There are 15 outages in your area.”
- Spell out numbers below 10
  - **Example:** “We have three service options available.”
- Use numerals for numbers below 10 when paired with units or ranges
  - **Example:** “Wait 1–2 business days” or “Wait 1 to 2 business days”
- Use ordinal numbers in numeric form (“3rd”) when clarity is essential, but avoid using ordinals in dates (preferring “March 3, 2025” to “March 3rd, 2025”)

### Units of measurement

- Use abbreviations for units of measurements — leave a space between the number and unit, and do not use a period at the end

- **Examples:** “15 kWh” and “10 lbs”
- Write out the word "degrees" instead of using the symbol for clarity and accessibility
  - **Example:** "72 degrees Fahrenheit"
- When indicating ranges, use "to" instead of a dash to avoid confusion
  - **Example:** "The average temperature from January to February was 32 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit"
- For a complete list of measurement abbreviations, see **[LINK TO GLOSSARY SECTION: Abbreviations for units of measurement]**

## Percentages

- Use the percent symbol (%) with numerals, and leave no space between the number and symbol
  - **Example:** “The storm impacted 15% of Pennsylvania residents”
- Spell out “percent” only when the sentence begins with a percentage
  - **Example:** “Fifteen percent of Pennsylvania residents reported storm damage”

## Money

- Use the appropriate currency symbol before numerals and no space between:
  - **Example:** \$500
- For large amounts, such as for “thousands” or “millions” of dollars, use abbreviations (with no spaces between the currency symbol, number, and unit abbreviation)
  - **Example (thousands):** \$5K
  - **Example (millions):** \$3.4M
  - **Example (billions):** \$5.6B

- For ranges of money amounts, use the same abbreviations for thousands, millions, and billions as specified above and include the abbreviation with both amounts to avoid confusion:
  - **Example (thousands):** \$5K–\$10K
  - **Example (millions):** \$1.5M–\$3M
  - **Example (billions):** \$2.3B–\$5.8B
- For ranges crossing units:
  - **Example:** \$950K–\$1.2M
- Avoid starting a sentence with a numeral. Instead, spell out the number or rephrase the sentence for clarity
  - **Example:** "Five hundred dollars were refunded to customers."
  - **Avoid:** "\$500 were refunded to customers."
- For large amounts, rephrase the sentence to avoid starting with the numeral altogether.
  - **Example:** "A total of \$5.6 billion was invested in infrastructure improvements."
  - **Avoid:** "\$5.6 billion was invested in infrastructure improvements."

## Pronoun usage

*\*Gender-specific pronoun usage covered in "Inclusive language" section*

Establishing clear rules around first- and second-person pronouns ensures our communication is consistent, professional, and appropriately empathetic.

### **First-person pronouns ("We"):**

- Use first-person pronouns when describing actions that PPL is taking on behalf of the user
  - **Good:** "We will process your request and notify you when it's complete."
  - **Avoid:** "We made an error in your bill calculation."

### **Second-person pronouns ("You"):**

- Use second-person pronouns to guide users in taking necessary actions or understanding relevant information
  - **Good:** “You will need your account number to complete this step.”
  - **Avoid:** “You didn’t complete all the required fields.”

# Content Structure and Hierarchy

A logical content structure with clear headings, concise body copy, and purposeful CTAs help users easily find what they need and take action.

- **Organize content logically:**
  - Arrange information to follow natural reading patterns, starting with the most essential details
- **Follow hierarchy for headings:**
  - Include headings and subheadings to divide sections clearly
  - Ensure each heading reflects the main idea of the section it introduces
- **Focus on one main idea per section:**
  - Group related information under appropriate headings and limit each section to one main idea
- **Make it scannable:**
  - Keep paragraphs brief and complement them with visuals, such as images or infographics, to make the page easier for readers to navigate

## Headings

Headings create hierarchy and guide users through the page, breaking information into digestible sections. They help readers scan content quickly and understand its structure. Effective headings also improve accessibility and search engine optimization (SEO).

- Select relevant keywords and use them consistently
- Use familiar language that mirrors the words and phrases your readers use
- Use heading levels in a logical order: start with H1 (main heading), followed by H2 (subheading), and H3 (supporting subheading) as needed
- Do not jump from an H2 directly to an H4, as this disrupts the content hierarchy
- Limit headings to 60 characters for clarity and readability

### H1 (main heading)

The H1 is the page's primary title. It clearly communicates the main topic or focus.

- Include only one H1 per page
- Write in **title case** to distinguish it visually from subheadings

- Use concise, specific language that clearly communicates the page’s focus
- Incorporate the most relevant keyword(s)
- Limit the heading to 60 characters for clarity and SEO

## **H2 (subheading)**

H2 subheadings break the content into major sections, making it easy for readers to scan and find information. Each H2 supports the H1 and introduces a new topic.

- Use **sentence case** for readability
- Write clear, action-oriented phrases to engage users
- Use multiple H2s on a page when needed to organize major sections
- Keep H2s concise and to the point

## **H3 (supporting subheading)**

H3 supporting subheadings divide H2 sections into smaller, specific topics, providing additional structure. They are most useful for text-heavy or complex pages.

- Use **sentence case** to maintain consistency and clarity
- Include H3s only when needed to organize detailed information
- Write clear, concise H3s that help users navigate the page

## **Body Copy**

Body copy is the main content on each page. It should be clear, inclusive, and aligned with SEO best practices to answer key user questions and meet user needs.

- **Use clear, inclusive language:** Write in plain language to ensure accessibility for all readers. Avoid jargon, technical terms, or industry-specific language unless necessary. Provide context for complex ideas to make content accessible to readers of all backgrounds.
- **Structure for readability:** Break content into short paragraphs (2-4 sentences) for easy scanning. Use bulleted and numbered lists when necessary to further break up the content and improve readability.
- **Use active voice:** Active voice ensures your message is direct and engaging. For example, “Explore our programs” is preferable to “Programs can be explored by anyone.”

- **Include SEO keywords naturally:** Use relevant keywords within the text to maintain a conversational tone. Prioritize the quality of content over keyword frequency, as excessive keywords can disrupt readability.

## Calls to Action (CTAs)

CTAs are buttons or links that guide users to take specific actions, such as learning more about a program, signing up for a service, or exploring additional resources. All CTAs should be clear, actionable, and aligned with both the page's content and user goals.

- **Write in sentence case:** Use sentence case for all CTAs, except for proper nouns (such as program titles). This improves readability and reduces cognitive load for readers.
- **Lead with verbs:** Choose action-oriented language that clearly tells the user what will happen when they click. For example, rather than “Click here,” opt for “Explore energy-saving tips.”
- **Balance brevity with detail:** While CTAs should be concise, clarity is paramount. Opt for slightly longer phrases when they provide additional context or guidance. For example, “Sign up for the Small Business Retrofit Program” provides more guidance and value than “Sign up.”
- **Maintain a calm, professional tone:** Avoid overly promotional phrases such as “Enroll now!” and avoid exclamation points. Use neutral wording that feels authoritative and trustworthy.
- **Avoid repetition:** Use varied phrasing to keep CTAs engaging across the page. Alternate leading verbs to avoid redundancy. For example, use “Learn about...” for one action and “Explore...” for another.

# Accessibility

Ensuring digital content is accessible helps all users, including those with temporary or permanent disabilities, navigate and understand information with ease. Adhering to accessibility guidelines improves usability and fosters inclusivity.

## Accessibility Standards

Follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to make content accessible to all users. These guidelines focus on four key principles that ensure content is:

- **Perceivable** – Clearly visible, audible, and distinguishable
- **Operable** – Easy to navigate via keyboard, voice commands, or assistive technology
- **Understandable** – Written in clear, user-friendly language
- **Robust** – Compatible with various devices and assistive technologies

## Alt text

Alt text makes images and graphics accessible to users who rely on screen readers. Effective alt text provides enough detail to convey the purpose and essential information of the image without overloading the user. Here's how to write it:

- **Focus on purpose:** Explain why the image is there. For example, describe what a graph shows rather than listing every data point.
- **Be concise but clear:** Write short descriptions that highlight important details. Example: "A line graph showing sales increasing from January to June."
- **Include the image text:** If an image contains text (such as in infographics), include that text in the alt description.
- **Use null alt text (alt="") for decorative images:** If the image doesn't add meaningful content, a null attribute lets screen readers skip it.

- **Avoid personal interpretation:** Describe only the visible and factual details of the image, avoiding opinions or subjective interpretations.
- **Skip unnecessary descriptors:** Don't use phrases such as "image of" or "graphic of" at the start of your alt text. Screen readers announce the presence of an image before the description, so this information is redundant.
- **Avoid overly detailed descriptions:** For complex visuals like charts or infographics, summarize the main point in the alt text and provide a longer description elsewhere, such as in the main content or a linked page.

### Testing for accessibility

Testing ensures your content meets accessibility needs. Use any of these tools and tips to evaluate your content and make content improvements:

- **Screen readers:** Use tools such as NVDA, JAWS, or VoiceOver to test how well headings, links, and alt text are read aloud. Ensure the reading order is logical and all important content is accessible.
- **Keyboard navigation:** Navigate your website using only a keyboard. Make sure users can access all content, use interactive elements, and move through the page in a logical order.
- **Automated testing tools:** Tools like WAVE, Axe, or Lighthouse can identify common issues such as missing alt text.
- **Beta testing:** Test your content with users who have disabilities for real-world insights into accessibility.
- **Alt text guides:** Browse WebAIM's alt text guide for practical examples and tips to help you write clear, effective alt text.

# Usability

Usability ensures content is easy to read, locate, navigate, and interact with across all digital platforms. Well-structured content reduces cognitive load and improves comprehension for all users.

## Mobile-First Guidelines

Clear, logical organization helps make sure content is easy to navigate and understand on smaller screens, enhancing user experience across all devices.

- **Prioritize key information:**
  - Place the most important content at the top of each page to ensure users find what they need quickly
- **Use clear headings:**
  - Organize content with clear and concise headings that allow users to scan effectively
- **Write short paragraphs:**
  - Keep paragraphs brief and focused to improve readability

## SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Effective SEO practices boost search rankings and make content more accessible, helping users find information quickly and understand it easily.

To optimize content for search engines, focus on the following practices:

- **Use plain language**

Write short sentences and paragraphs to ensure content is accessible for all reading levels.
- **Use relevant keywords**

Identify relevant keywords that align with user search intent and integrate them naturally in headings, subheadings, and body text. Avoid “keyword stuffing.” Instead, aim for a balance that enhances readability and keeps content engaging.

- **Optimize headings and subheadings**

Organize content with clear, structured headings and subheadings. Place keywords strategically within headings to help search engines identify key topics while making content scannable for users.

- **Write effective image descriptions (alt text)**

Provide clear, descriptive alt text that describes the image's purpose and includes relevant keywords. This helps to improve accessibility for users who rely on screen readers.

## Readability Best Practices

Writing readable and accessible copy helps users navigate effortlessly through digital experiences and services at PPL. Create strong copy by using:

- **Simple language**

Deliver information clearly and concisely. Don't use five words if you can use three. Use adverbs and adjectives sparingly.

- **White space**

Use ample white space to reduce visual clutter and help users focus on key elements.

- **Informative introductions**

Let readers know early on what they're reading and why it matters.

- **Good:** "This form includes important information about your claim."
- **Avoid:** "Hello! We hope you'll read this very important message"

- **Active voice**

As a general rule, use active voice. Strong verbs are assertive and have the greatest impact. Don't use passive voice unless the context calls for it.

- **Good:** "The customer paid the bill."
- **Avoid:** "The bill was paid by the customer."

- **Passive voice**

Use passive voice only when you need to avoid placing unfair blame or responsibility on the customer.

- **Good:** “Your power was shut off due to a missed payment.”
- **Avoid:** “We shut off your power because you failed to pay your bill.”
  
- **Sensitive phrasing**  
Don’t use phrasing that sounds accusatory, as this also shifts blame onto the user.
  - **Good:** “You must provide your account number.”
  - **Avoid:** “You forgot to enter your account number.”

## Bite, Snack, Meal

Make content accessible to a wide range of literacy levels by using this content design framework for structuring information clearly.

- **Bite:** The title or H1, offering a quick takeaway
- **Snack:** A brief introduction or bullet point synopsis for a concise summary
- **Meal:** The detailed content for readers who want additional context or in-depth information

Apply the "Bite, Snack, Meal" approach to reduce cognitive load. Break down content into small, easily digestible section headings (bite), then add a concise and informative summary (snack), followed by a detailed explanation (meal) to cater to users who skim, scan, or read deeply. Here’s an example:

### **Bite**

Save energy by turning off the lights

### **Snack**

Turning off lights when you leave a room is one of the easiest and most effective ways to save energy and reduce costs.

### **Meal**

Every light left on consumes electricity, and that energy use adds up over time, impacting both your electric bill and the environment. By making a habit of turning off lights in unoccupied rooms, you can lower energy consumption, which translates to fewer fossil fuels burned to generate power and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Incandescent bulbs in particular consume more energy and produce more heat compared to energy-efficient options like LEDs, so be sure to switch them off when you’re not using them and cut down on unnecessary energy waste.

## Omnichannel Approach

Consistent messaging across channels gives users a seamless experience with PPL's brand on every platform. This approach involves using the same core messaging and voice on all platforms so interactions feel seamless. To achieve consistency across all channels:

- **Use templates and reusable components:** Use similar content templates for different types of communications, such as account alerts, billing updates, and general website information. These templates help maintain consistent formatting, phrasing, and branding.
- **Standardize information:** Ensure critical information is identical across channels to prevent confusion. For example, billing information should outline the same due dates and steps whether accessed via email or the website.
- **Adapt for channel differences:** While messaging should be consistent, content should account for platform-specific considerations and changes in tone, such as shorter text for SMS, visual elements for apps, or more detailed explanations on the web.

## Inclusion

Our commitment to inclusivity ensures that our language is not only respectful, accessible, and welcoming but also rooted in empathy. By considering different perspectives and lived experiences, we create content that makes all users feel seen and valued.

## Inclusive language

### **Socio-Economic Sensitivity**

Be mindful of socioeconomic diversity by avoiding assumptions about wealth, access to resources, or lifestyle.

### **Age Inclusivity**

Ensure content is accessible to all age groups by using plain, straightforward instructions.

## LGBTQ+ Inclusivity

Use language that respects diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

## Gender-Neutral Language

Avoid gendered terms and ensure that language respects all gender identities.

## Religious and Spiritual Sensitivity

Avoid assumptions or exclusionary language tied to specific religious practices or beliefs.

## Localization and Translation

Ensure content is culturally appropriate and easy to translate by avoiding idioms or region-specific references.

# Terminology

## Spelling and usage

### A

- **acre:** Use figures.  
*Example:* PPL is donating 9 acres.
- **adviser:** Use this spelling.
- **Affordance:** Elements that indicate what actions are possible or expected.  
*Example:* The design of a power switch offers the affordance of turning it on or off.

### B

- **baby, infant, toddler:**
  - *Baby:* Up to 18 months.
  - *Infant:* Up to 12 months.
  - *Toddler:* 18 to 24 months.
- **Base rate:** The standard charge for energy service, before any additional fees or taxes.  
*Example:* The base rate covers the cost of providing electricity to customers.
- **bed-and-breakfast:** Always hyphenate.
- **Black:**

- Capitalize when used as an adjective in racial, ethnic, or cultural contexts: *Black people, Black employees, Black culture.*
- Avoid using *African American* or *Black American* as blanket terms. Use *Caribbean American* when appropriate.
- *White* remains lowercase when referring to race.

## C

- **CEO:**
  - Spell out on first reference: *chief executive officer*. Capitalize when before a name. Lowercase when after a name.
  - *Example:* Vince Sorgi is president and chief executive officer.
- **call out, call-out roster:**
  - To *call out* employees: "The dispatcher asked for call outs."
  - *Example:* Employees respond to a *call-out request*.
- **central and eastern Pennsylvania:**
  - Refers to PPL Electric Utilities' service territory. Do not hyphenate.
  - *Example:* *central and eastern Pennsylvania*.
- **Chairman, chairwoman, chairperson:**
  - Use *chairman* or *chairwoman*. Only use *chairperson* if it is the organization's formal title.

## D

- **Demand charge:** A fee based on the highest level of energy use during a billing period.  
*Example:* The company applied a demand charge for exceeding peak usage.
- **decision-making:** Hyphenate as a noun or adjective.
- **Do's and don'ts:**
  - The *do* takes an apostrophe because it's a verb being treated as a plural noun.
- **Disability:** The term "disabilities" is accurate and widely accepted, particularly in legal and accessibility contexts such as the ADA and WCAG. Depending on the audience, alternatives such as "people with disabilities" or "all users" may feel more inclusive.
- **Distribution:** The delivery of electricity from substations to homes and businesses.  
*Example:* The utility company manages the distribution of electricity to local areas.

## E

- **email:** Lowercase and no hyphen unless it starts a sentence.
- **EPRI:** Spell out on first reference as *Electric Power Research Institute*.
- **emissions:**
  - Do not hyphenate chemical compounds when referring to power plant emissions.
  - *Example: nitrogen oxides emissions, sulfur dioxide emissions.*

## F

- **firsthand:** Use as one word.
- **first-come, first-served:** Hyphenate as a phrase.
- **FORTUNE 500:**
  - Use *FORTUNE 500* when referring to the magazine's listing.
  - Use *Fortune* when referring to the magazine title.

## G

- **grade level:**
  - Use figures and hyphens appropriately: *Grades 3–5, third-grade teacher, 10th-grader.*
- **grass roots, grass-roots:**
  - As a noun: *grass roots.*
  - As a modifier: *grass-roots.*
- **Grid:** The interconnected network for delivering electricity from producers to consumers.  
*Example: The power grid ensures electricity reaches homes and businesses.*

## K

- **Kilowatt-hour (kWh):** A unit of energy representing one kilowatt of power used for one hour.  
*Example: Your electricity bill is based on the number of kilowatt-hours consumed.*

## P

- **Peak hours:** The times during the day when energy demand is highest.  
*Example: Energy usage during peak hours can be more expensive.*
- **Power grid:** Use on first reference when describing the grid. Subsequent references can use *grid*.

## R

- **Rate schedule:** The pricing structure for different levels of energy usage.  
*Example:* The rate schedule outlines the costs for residential and commercial customers.
- **Renewable energy:** Energy from natural resources that replenish over time, such as solar or wind.  
*Example:* The company offers renewable energy plans for eco-conscious customers.

## S

- **Service territory:** The geographic area where a utility company provides service.  
*Example:* Rhode Island Energy's service territory covers most of the state.
- **Smart meter:** A digital device that records electricity use in real-time and communicates it to the utility company.  
*Example:* Smart meters help customers monitor their electricity usage more accurately.

## T

- **Transmission:** The movement of electricity from power plants to local substations via high-voltage lines.  
*Example:* Transmission lines carry power across long distances.
- **tune-up, tune up:**
  - As a noun: *tune-up*.
  - As a verb: *tune up*.

## U

- **U.S., United States:**
  - Use *U.S.* as a noun when appropriate.
  - Spell out as *United States* when paired with *United Kingdom*.

## W

- **work-:**
  - Compound words include *workday*, *workweek*, and *workforce*.
  - Exceptions: *work group*, *work site*.

## Z

- **ZIP code:** Capitalize *ZIP* but lowercase *code*.
  - *ZIP* stands for *Zoning Improvement Plan*.

## Preferred phrases and terms

### Account number

- **Avoid:** Customer ID
- **Example:** "Please provide your account number."

### Contact us

- **Avoid:** Reach out to us
- **Example:** "Contact us for more information."

### Electricity bill

- **Avoid:** Power bill
- **Example:** "Review your electricity bill."

### Energy bill

- **Avoid:** Electricity bill, Power bill, Gas bill
- **Example:** "Review your energy bill."

### Enroll

- **Avoid:** Sign up
- **Example:** "Enroll in AutoPay."

### Sign in (verb)

- **Avoid:** Login used incorrectly as a verb
- **Example:** "Sign in to your account."

### Monthly charge

- **Avoid:** Monthly fee
- **Example:** "Your monthly charge will be \$50."

### Payment plan

- **Avoid:** Payment option
- **Example:** "Sign up for a payment plan."

### Service outage

- **Avoid:** Power disruption, power outage
- **Example:** "Report a service outage."

### Savings program

- **Avoid:** Rebate program
- **Example:** "Join our energy savings program."

### Set up (verb)

- **Avoid:** Setup (noun) used incorrectly as a verb
- **Example:** "Set up your account."

### Shut off (verb)

- **Avoid:** Shutoff (noun), shut-off (adjective) used incorrectly
- **Example:** "We'll shut off your service tomorrow."

### Start service

- **Avoid:** Initiate service
- **Example:** "Start service at your new home."

## Words and phrases to avoid

### And/or

Why: It's confusing and makes sentences unnecessarily complex.

- **Good:** "You can pay with a credit card or a bank transfer."
- **Avoid:** "You can pay with a credit card and/or a bank transfer."

### Click here

Why: Not descriptive and poor for accessibility.

- **Good:** "View your energy usage summary."
- **Avoid:** "Click here to view your energy usage summary."

## **Do not hesitate**

Why: Outdated and overly formal. Offer a direct call-to-action instead.

- **Good:** "Contact us if you have questions."
- **Avoid:** "Do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions."

## **In order to**

Why: It's wordy and redundant. "To" works just as well.

- **Good:** "Sign in to access your account."
- **Avoid:** "Sign in in order to access your account."

## **Just**

Why: It can sound dismissive or minimize the effort required by the user.

- **Good:** "Click to update your account settings."
- **Avoid:** "Just click to update your account settings."

## **Kindly**

Why: Can sound overly formal or condescending. Be clear and straightforward instead.

- **Good:** "Upload your documents by Friday."
- **Avoid:** "Kindly upload your documents by Friday."

## **Oops / Uh-oh**

Why: These terms can feel unprofessional or insensitive, especially when users encounter errors.

- **Good:** "We couldn't process your request. Try again later."
- **Avoid:** "Oops! Something went wrong."

## **Please / Please note**

Why: Adds unnecessary formality and can clutter copy.

- **Good:** "Your payment is due on April 5."
- **Avoid:** "Please note that your payment is due on April 5."

## Sorry for the inconvenience / We apologize for the inconvenience

Why: Feels impersonal and doesn't address user frustration.

- **Good:** "We're working to resolve this issue quickly. Thank you for your patience."
- **Avoid:** "Sorry for the inconvenience."

**That** (when unnecessary)

Why: "That" can clutter copy. Use it only when removing it causes confusion.

- **Good:** "We noticed your account needs attention."
- **Avoid:** "We noticed that your account needs attention."

## Utilize

Why: It's unnecessarily complex when "use" is clear and direct.

- **Good:** "Use this tool to track your energy usage."
- **Avoid:** "Utilize this tool to track your energy usage."

## Abbreviations for units of measurement

### Length, Distance, and Area

- **mm:** millimeter
- **cm:** centimeter
- **m:** meter
- **km:** kilometer
- **in:** inch
- **ft:** foot/feet
- **yd:** yard
- **mi:** mile
- **sq in:** square inch
- **sq ft:** square foot/feet
- **sq yd:** square yard
- **ac:** acre

- **ha: hectare**

### **Electricity and Energy**

- **A: ampere**
- **V: volt**
- **W: watt**
- **kW: kilowatt**
- **Wh: watt-hour**
- **kWh: kilowatt-hour**
- **J: joule**
- **KJ: kilojoule**
- **BTU: British thermal unit**
- **Hz: hertz**
- **kHz: kilohertz**
- **GHz: gigahertz**

### **Gas Measurement**

- **ccf: 100 cubic feet**
- **Mcf: 1,000 cubic feet**
- **Btu: British thermal unit**
- **therm: 100,000 BTU**
- **cfm: cubic feet per minute (for flow rate)**

### **Temperature**

- **°C: degrees Celsius**
- **°F: degrees Fahrenheit**
- **K: kelvin (no degree symbol)**

### **Pressure**

- **Pa: pascal**
- **kPa: kilopascal**
- **psi: pounds per square inch**
- **atm: atmosphere**

### **Speed and Flow Rate**

- **mph: miles per hour**
- **km/h: kilometers per hour**
- **m/s: meters per second**
- **cfm: cubic feet per minute**

### **Volume and Capacity**

- **ml: milliliter**
- **l: liter**
- **tsp: teaspoon**
- **tbsp: tablespoon**
- **fl oz: fluid ounce**
- **c: cup**
- **pt: pint**
- **qt: quart**
- **gal: gallon**

### **Weight and Mass**

- **mg: milligram**
- **g: gram**
- **kg: kilogram**
- **oz: ounce**
- **lb: pound (singular and plural use the same abbreviation)**
- **t: ton**