

The Ultimate Copy Checklist:

Ask Yourself These 51 Questions to Optimize
Every Element of Your Online Copy

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HEADLINE

- Audience:** Does your headline directly identify and address your audience?
- Clarity:** Does your headline contain any technical or unnecessary words?
- Emotion:** Is one dominant emotion (i.e., “mass desire”) powerfully verbalized?
- Intention:** Does your headline show the audience exactly what they should do or expect on your page?
- Interest:** Does the headline startle your audience or “enter a conversation already taking place in their minds?”
- Momentum:** Does your headline propel the reader into the subheadline for an answer, solution, or explanation?

SUBHEADLINE

- Connection:** Does your subheadline retain and support the same thought, concept, or dominant emotion in your headline?
- Intensify:** Does your subheadline amplify the one dominant emotion from your headline?
- Qualify:** Does your subheadline narrow your audience by adding qualifications?
- Push:** Does your subheadline push the reader into the first sentence to find an answer, solution, or explanation?

VALUE PROPOSITION

- Unmistakable:** Is your value proposition visually prominent and unmistakable?
- Target Market:** Does your value proposition directly address one target market?
- Desirable:** Does one key benefit, or “mass desire,” powerfully verbalize your value proposition?
- Simple:** Is your value proposition clear, concise, and memorable?
- Unique:** Does your value proposition clearly differentiate you from the competition in at least one specific way?
- Quantified:** Is your value proposition supported by at least one piece of concrete data?

INTRODUCTION

- Build:** Does your first sentence continue the momentum — the same emotional or mental energy — from your headline and subheadline?
- Flow:** Is your first sentence smooth, simple, and incredibly easy to read?

- Body:** Do your first, second, and third paragraphs intensify and expand the same dominant emotion contained in the headline and subheadline?

SUBHEADS

- Scannable:** Are subheads evenly spaced (roughly every three to six paragraphs) to break up the copy and reinforce the page's one dominant emotion?

- Benefits:** Do your subheads highlight the "major" and "minor" benefits of your article, product, or service?

CONCLUSION

- Climax:** Does the last sentence end on a climax consistent with the page's one dominant emotion?
- Realistic:** Does the conclusion "shrink the change" by offering a path to action that is "concrete and doable" today?

- Action:** Does the conclusion drive the reader to action (see "Call to action" below)?

CALL TO ACTION (CTA, THE "OFFER")

- Singular:** Does the page have one (and only one) clear and direct CTA?
- Visible:** Is the CTA easy to locate and visible at multiple points on the page (i.e., always just a "scroll" away)?
- Promise:** Does the CTA promise value "in advance?"
- Button:** Is the button copy seductive and actionable?
- Next:** Does the CTA tell the visitor exactly what's next (i.e., what he can expect after he clicks)?

- Forms:** Are the form fields brief, limited in number, and fool proof (i.e., have you tested them to make sure they actually work)?
- Trust:** Does the CTA have a trust certificate to relieve the fear of converting?
- Trial:** Does the CTA have a trial period to relieve the fear of committing?
- Guarantee:** Does the CTA have a guarantee to relieve the fear of buying?

VOICE

- Conversational:** Does your copy sound like one real human communicating with another real human?
- You:** Does your copy speak directly to your audience by using the word "you?"

- Smooth:** Does any phrase "sound weird" when you read it out loud?
- Straightforward Words:** Is the page free of jargon, insider language, and clichés?

ARGUMENTS

- Data:** Does your copy provide concrete and credible data — i.e., numbers — to back up its claims?
- Application:** Is data explained, interpreted, and applied in terms related directly to the page's key benefits?
- Actors:** Is your copy composed of "actors" — real flesh-and-blood characters?
- Vivid Verbs:** Do your "actors" act with vivid verbs rather than bland versions of "to be"?
- Story:** Does the page tell a story — a single, overarching narrative?
- Hero:** Is your audience the hero of the story?
- Hell:** Does your story paint a vivid portrait of the "hell" (i.e., the pain or fear) your message, product, or service diminishes?
- Heaven:** Does your story paint a vivid portrait of the "heaven" (i.e., the pleasure) your message, product, or service delivers?
- Senses:** Does your copy use sensory language: seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling?

THE "WEAPONS OF PERSUASION"

- Reciprocity:** What free value does your page provide for its audience?
- Consistency:** Does your page invite small, initial commitments that align with the big, ultimate "ask"?
- Social Proof:** Does your page present testimonials from a variety of sources its audience naturally trusts — namely, industry experts and other people just like them?
- Likability:** Does your page establish "similarity" with its audience by using relatable language and humor?
- Scarcity:** If appropriate, does your page "play hard to get" by making the reader want what he can't have?

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