



Style guide starters

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Creating a style guide from scratch can feel overwhelming. Below are three approaches that make it easier to get started.

Option 1: Use our sample style guide template

The below sample style guide template covers the most common style guide elements. Feel free to customize it to fit your brand voice, audience, and product.

Voice and tone

1. **Voice:** Friendly, professional, and clear.
2. **Tone:** Supportive and helpful. Avoid jargon where possible.
3. **Use active voice** (e.g., *"Click the button"* instead of *"The button should be clicked"*).

Writing style

1. Write in **short, concise sentences**.
2. Use **plain language** whenever possible.
3. **Explain acronyms and abbreviations** the first time they appear.
4. Use **consistent terminology**.

Formatting and structure

1. **Headings:**
 - a. Use clear, descriptive headings.
 - b. Use sentence case (e.g., *Configuring your account*).
2. **Paragraphs:**
 - a. Keep paragraphs short (2–4 sentences).
3. **Lists:**
 - a. Use bullet lists for options and steps.

- b. Use numbered lists for sequences.

4. Links:

- a. Embed links in descriptive text (*Learn more about billing settings*).

Terminology

1. Refer to your product or service **consistently by its proper name**.
2. Use **customer-centric language** (e.g., *"you"* and *"your"* instead of *"the user"*).
3. Example terms (customize as needed):
4. **Sign in** instead of *log in*
5. **Account settings** instead of *user preferences*
6. **Help Center** instead of *knowledge base*

Capitalization and punctuation

1. Use sentence case for headings.
2. Capitalize product names and feature names.
3. Use the **Oxford comma** in lists.
4. Avoid exclamation points unless celebrating something (*Congratulations!*).

Screenshots and images

1. Use clear, high-resolution images.
2. Crop images to focus on relevant areas.
3. Add captions where helpful.
4. If including steps, **highlight** the UI elements.

Examples and code

1. Format code snippets in monospace font.
2. Use consistent indentation.
3. Provide example outputs.

Accessibility

1. Use alt text for all images.
2. Avoid color as the only means of conveying information.

Option 2: Use another style guide template

You can also search for other style guide templates that might work well for you.

Thursday Bram has a nice template available in .docx format on her [blog](#), available at: [Download My In-House Style Guide Template to Use However You Want](#) or as a [Google Doc](#) you can copy.

Option 3: Use a common style guide and only document additions or exceptions to that guide

This is one of the most powerful approaches: You can tell Owl Intelligence to follow an established style guide, then document only your exceptions.

For example, you can use something like the [Google developer documentation style guide](#) as a base, and then your own style guide references that and only provides more specific additions or exceptions to that guide.

Your style guide might say:

Follow the Google developer documentation style guide. Exceptions: Use "Help Center" instead of "knowledge base"; write out numbers one through nine instead of using numerals (1-9); use "email" as both a noun and verb (not "e-mail"); always capitalize "Internet."

Another example prompt:

Follow the Microsoft Writing Style Guide. Exception: Use title case for all headings instead of sentence case (e.g. "Getting Started With Your Account" instead of "Getting started with your account").

The AI model that Owl Intelligence uses is already trained on many major style guides, so you don't need to copy and paste their full content—you can just reference them by name and note where your organization differs.

Deanna Thompson gave a great talk on this strategy at Write the Docs Portland 2021:

Commonly recognized style guides include:

- [Google developer documentation style guide](#)
- [Microsoft Writing Style Guide](#)
- [Apple Style Guide](#)
- [Chicago Manual of Style](#)
- [Associated Press Stylebook](#)

Additional resources

For more guidance on creating effective style guides, check out the Write the Docs [Style Guides page](#).
