



THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

# VOICE AND TONE GUIDE

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## SECTION 1.0

# THE UTOLEDO BRAND VOICE

## WHAT IS VOICE?

One way to ensure consistency in a brand is to define the brand voice.

Brand voice is much like a person's voice. Everyone's voice sounds a little bit different; it's one way to distinguish between people you know. When someone you know calls you on the phone, you don't have to see them in order to confirm it's them. Their voice is familiar because their voice is consistent.

### **Voice Overview**

The University of Toledo's voice is focused, determined, community-minded and impactful. These qualities make a direct tie-in with the brand attributes. Each touch point to the brand, in all departments and marketing efforts, should use this voice. However, in doing so, please keep the reader in mind and write for your audience.

You can achieve a certain voice in copywriting by following a few guidelines. We'll call these pillars of the voice. Refer back to these examples whenever you're writing for The University of Toledo. Consistency is key.

# PILLARS OF THE VOICE

## Pillar One

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**Our voice is...** Focused

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**Write like this...** “Being part of a community strengthens the college experience. The Office of Student Involvement and Leadership creates opportunities for students to do just that.”

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**Not this...** “The Office of Student Involvement & Leadership seeks to build community and is committed to providing students with opportunities for involvement that will enhance and complement their UToledo experience.”  
– *Excerpt from [utoledo.edu/getinvolved](http://utoledo.edu/getinvolved)*

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**Why?** Long-winded explanations compromise the reader’s attention and understanding. Writing feels more focused when it balances brevity and clarity. Strive to use active over passive voice. An active voice shows confidence, while the passive voice feels hesitant.

## Pillar Two

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**Our voice is...** Determined

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**Write like this...** “Learn hands-on in the field that interests you. Business internships provide exposure and build confidence — some even lead to full-time positions. You’ll learn from accomplished leaders and earn a paycheck while working toward your degree.”

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**Not this...** “Students can gain real-world experience through numerous internship opportunities that often lead to full-time positions. This lets students work with accomplished professionals in leadership and management while earning college credit and money.”  
– *Excerpt from [Organizational Leadership and Management](#) prospective student flyer*

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**Why?** Leverage conversational writing and active verbs. This creates a sense of energy in the writing and keeps it real. Hold back on flowery language and qualifying clauses — determined people like to get to the point, so they can keep moving toward their goals.

## Pillar Three

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**Our voice is...** Community-minded

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**Write like this...** “The UToledo Research Council and grant writing staff provide research proposal guidance. A core group of faculty experts also is available for review and feedback. If you’re interested in faculty review, please contact the team below. If they cannot provide immediate assistance, a faculty alternate from your discipline can lend a hand.”

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**Not this...** “In addition to our grant writing staff and under the auspices of the UToledo Research Council, a core group of faculty is available to help review and edit proposals and offer helpful commentary. If you wish to avail yourself of this opportunity, the following faculty can be contacted. If they cannot provide assistance themselves, they can nominate someone in your discipline or a related discipline who can do so.”  
– *Excerpt from research proposal assistance instructions*

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**Why?** Community-minded writing is inclusive and approachable. If there’s a way to simplify your message, please do. Research shows content written at a 9th-grade level is more likely to be read — even among highly proficient readers. An approachable tone reflects the University’s dedication to being accessible.

## Pillar Four

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**Our voice is...** Impactful

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**Write like this...** “Engineers at The University of Toledo have transformed how to calculate the amount of asphalt needed for road pavement projects, which could dramatically reduce waste making a positive impact on the environment and saving millions of dollars in the process.”

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**Not this...** “A team of engineers at The University of Toledo created a new procedure and design software to more accurately estimate the structural capacity of existing pavement that could save the Ohio Department of Transportation millions of dollars on road improvement projects and be adopted by states across the country.”  
– *Excerpt from UToledo news article*

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**Why?** Focus less on the “what” and more on the “why”. Impact isn’t about what’s being done — it’s about why it matters. Ask yourself: What is the big picture and how does it relate to the greater community? Frame information from this human-centered perspective.

# APPLYING THE ATTRIBUTES

Each of the brand attributes includes a series of supportive words and phrases.

These help to reinforce the brand narrative and capture the reflective and aspirational qualities of the University. Use these synonymous key words and phrases when writing in the brand voice. The following are examples of UToledo copywriting using the words and phrases.

## Innovative

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**What are the key words and phrases?**

- Creative
- Original
- Cutting edge
- Unique
- Advanced
- Inventive
- Visionary
- New
- Leading-edge
- Problem-solving
- Forward-thinking
- Groundbreaking

**What does this look like in context?**

### CREATE OR CREATIVE

Outside the classroom, teams of undergraduate engineering students at The University of Toledo are applying their skills to solve problems and change lives. Lex Potter, a double amputee, enlisted one of the UToledo student teams this year to create a better way for him to move through the water to support his new hobby of scuba diving.

### PROBLEM-SOLVING

For nearly two decades, Dr. Tom Bridgeman has earnestly and tirelessly studied the waters of Lake Erie on his hunt for answers to solve a problem of algal blooms worldwide and protect drinking water. His weapon of choice in the fight against toxic algae is information gathered by boat and by buoy, a battlefield that also allows him to sound the early warning each algal bloom season to water treatment plant operators who pump raw lake water.

### FORWARD-THINKING

The University of Toledo is accelerating into uncharted territory by enrolling students for the first online PhD program approved in Ohio. The forward-thinking, flexible program paves a new, innovative way for professionals driven to advance their careers by achieving the highest level of education through online learning.

## Determined

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What are the key words and phrases?

- Driven
- Committed
- Resolved
- Ambitious
- Steadfast
- Tenacious
- Bold
- Diligent
- Hard-working
- Go-getter
- Persevering
- Relentless

What does this look like in context?

### DRIVE OR DRIVEN

Tyrone Jacobs Jr.'s drive to succeed is larger-than-life — like the ginormous image of him on a wall at LinkedIn headquarters in California. His determination is evident in a line from an April post that is by his photo: "I will never, and I mean never, stop striving for greatness."

### COMMITTED

Celia Williamson is determined to end human trafficking. The UToledo social work professor is committed to defending the rights of women and girls on a local, national and international level through education, research and advocacy. Because of her focus in raising awareness about this practice of modern day slavery, new laws have been passed that strengthen support services for survivors and provide for harsher penalties for the perpetrators.

### RESOLVE OR RESOLVED

UToledo graduate student Holly Embke's resolve is unmatched as she attempts to identify the number of invasive Asian grass carp in an effort to protect the Great Lakes wetlands. She's determined to discover the potential risks to waterfowl habitat and wetlands, should this species arrive in the Great Lakes.

## Focused

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What are the key words and phrases?

- Specialized
- Purposeful
- Centered
- Intent
- Goal-oriented
- Mission-driven
- Student-centered

What does this look like in context?

### **MISSION-DRIVEN**

The University of Toledo is a mission-driven institution focused on supporting student success and advancing research knowledge.

### **STUDENT-CENTERED**

The Tuition Guarantee program, which went into effect fall 2018, supports the University's student-centered vision by allowing students to focus on their studies and not worry about the cost of education. Students in the program pay the same undergraduate tuition from day one through graduation four years later.

### **SPECIALIZED OR SPECIALIZATION**

Dr. Bina Joe has focused her life's work on finding a cure for hypertension. The internationally recognized medical researcher specializes in identifying genes that contribute to the disorder that affects one in three adults.

## Inquisitive

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What are the key words and phrases?

- Curiosity
- Discovery
- Exploration
- Fact-finding
- Analytical
- Questioning
- Seeking
- Investigate

What does this look like in context?

### CURIOSITY

Noel Richardson's curiosity spans galaxies and light years on his mission to explore the universe and uncover its mysteries. Creative, clever and inquisitive, the postdoctoral astronomy research associate made use of a NASA space telescope to dissect and decipher fresh data leading to NASA's newest discovery: a famously furious star system that shoots cosmic rays.

### DISCOVERY

Researchers at The University of Toledo zeroed in on how blue light can damage eyes and made a discovery that lays the groundwork for targeted efforts to protect vision in a high-tech world. "It's no secret that blue light harms our vision by damaging the eye's retina. Our experiments pinpoint how this happens. This is just the beginning."

### EXPLORATION

The annual Scholars Celebration showcases undergraduate research and creative presentations. The interdisciplinary research event celebrates students' exploration and research achievements, while learning and inquiring about the fascinating work being done throughout the many diverse fields of study at UToledo.

## Supportive

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What are the key words and phrases?

- Encourage
- Advocate
- Collaborative
- Welcoming
- Responsive
- Reassuring
- Considerate
- Helpful
- Understanding

What does this look like in context?

### ENCOURAGE

Toledo Excel, a scholarship incentive program at The University of Toledo, will observe its 25th anniversary this year with a celebration Wednesday, May 8 to showcase the program and its students, who are on a mission to succeed. Toledo Excel is designed to prepare students, beginning in the eighth grade, for success in college by supporting them with academic enrichment services and activities throughout their high school years, and then encouraging and guiding them through the college education process.

### ADVOCATE

UToledo's success coaches are student advocates who are committed to enhancing the student experience and increasing retention. Their top priority is supporting students as their main point of contact to help them navigate college life and stay on track through graduation.

### COLLABORATIVE

For UToledo researchers Dr. Ngalula Mubenga and Dr. Tom Stuart, professor emeritus, collaborative efforts have led to a game-changing discovery — the first hybrid battery that combines high performance and low cost.

## Impactful

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What are the key words and phrases?

- Significant
- Influential
- Notable
- Prominent
- Effective
- Powerful
- Important
- Substantial
- Valuable

What does this look like in context?

### **SIGNIFICANT**

Full of tenacity, humanity and music, students at The University of Toledo danced and sang to the tune of putting a roof over the heads of veterans and their families. This year's Songfest made a tremendous impact to lift the lives of homeless veterans across Ohio, raising more than \$60,000 for Veterans Matter, an organization based in Toledo determined to finding homes for veterans in Toledo, Dayton and Cincinnati. The fundraiser's significant success allowed the nonprofit to expand to Cleveland and Columbus areas.

### **INFLUENCE OR INFLUENTIAL**

Engineers at The University of Toledo on a mission to improve transportation transformed how to calculate the amount of asphalt needed for road pavement projects, making a meaningful impact on the economy and the environment. The new procedure and design software can dramatically influence the future of road construction to more accurately estimate the structural capacity of existing pavement that could reduce waste, save the Ohio Department of Transportation up to \$40 million a year on road improvement projects, be adopted by states across the U.S. and make a positive impact on the planet.

## SECTION 2.0

# ESTABLISHING TONE OF VOICE

## WHAT IS TONE?

A brand voice creates a central feel; the tone is how you customize the voice to fit a specific audience or subject.

Think about how you speak in everyday life. Your voice stays the same. Your tone is on a spectrum. Sometimes your tone is brief and directive. Other times, your tone is persuasive and playful.

### **Tone Overview**

The University's tone varies by audience and type of conversation. Check out the following examples. You'll notice the brand voice is carried throughout. It's focused, determined, community-minded, impactful — but there's a greater awareness to language that fits the audience and intent.

### **Establishing Tone**

To convey the aspirational and forward-thinking message of our brand consistently, all content should reflect one or more of the following tones:

- Confident
- Inclusive
- Encouraging
- Ambitious
- Energetic

# EXAMPLES OF TONE

## Tone: To-the-point, helpful

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### Audience

Current students

### Goal

Explain directions for scholarship information in the new year

### SAMPLE COPYWRITING

Let the Office of Student Financial Aid know if you earned other financial aid, outside of what's in your UToledo award package. This could include awards like:

- Department scholarships
- Non-university scholarships
- Veteran's benefits
- Graduate assistantships
- Residence hall advisor stipends

Once that's done, we'll send you an email to confirm the changes.

– *Rewritten copy from existing financial aid form*

## Tone: Empathetic, candid

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### Audience

Parents of undergraduate students

### Goal

Build trust in the University as the best place for their child to attend

### SAMPLE COPYWRITING

Sending a child to college can feel exciting, overwhelming and nerve-racking — all at once. We know because a lot of us have been there ourselves. You can count on our University team. We'll share resources and tips to help make the college transition the best it can be.

– *Example marketing copy for utoledo.edu/parent*

## Tone: Personal, conversational

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### Audience

Alumni

### Goal

Continue to build rapport with alumni and stay invested

### SAMPLE COPYWRITING

Hi Jackie, Thanks for updating your information with the UToledo Alumni Association. We're glad you're here and hope you'll continue to stay in touch. Next month, we're hosting...

– *Sample follow up email from the Alumni Association*

## Tone: Supportive, motivational

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### Audience

Prospective graduate students

### Goal

Encourage prospects to take action in advancing their education

### SAMPLE COPYWRITING

Take the next step in your career. Flexible courses, supportive faculty and focused curriculum create the foundation for success.

– *Sample introductory copy for a marketing piece*

## **Tone: Empowering, collaborative**

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### **Audience**

Faculty

### **Goal**

Provide encouragement and support in collectively advancing University goals

### **SAMPLE COPYWRITING**

Faculty achievement and advancement helps define the way forward for The University of Toledo. Your tenure or promotion powers opportunity — furthering our shared vision for the University and fostering student success at all levels. You're an important part of our mission.

– *Sample website copy for Office of the Provost: Tenure and Promotion*

## **Tone: Energetic, confident**

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### **Audience**

Athletic event attendees

### **Goal**

Build momentum and excitement for the new year of athletics

### **SAMPLE COPYWRITING**

Sights set high, we won't settle. We're pushing limits and going for gold. Let nothing stand in the way of victory. The University of Toledo Rockets lead the way.

– *Sample athletics website copy*

## **Tone: Appreciative, earnest**

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### **Audience**

Donors and sponsors

### **Goal**

Share updates on the University and inspire financial giving

### **SAMPLE COPYWRITING**

We reach new heights together. Thank you for your continued support of The University of Toledo. Your generosity powers our success by advancing discovery and providing opportunity to all.

– *Sample thank you card copy*

## SECTION 3.0

# CONTENT STRATEGY

## WRITING HEADLINES

*Fueling Tomorrows* extends beyond a tagline as a framing device for messaging.

The Fueling Tomorrows tagline is made of two distinct parts: “fueling” as an action and “tomorrows” as an outcome. What does an action like “fueling” mean? And what sort of “tomorrows” does UToledo help its community achieve? This can be answered by creating a list of abstract and literal synonyms that represent the two parts of the tagline. Using this way of thinking, a flexible headlines system takes shape. Check out some examples on the following page.

## Basic Headline Formula

### Action + Outcome = Headline

Depending on context, the action can be a continual quality of the institution (ie. sparking change) or a directive call to action for the audience (ie. spark change). The preferred treatment of the action is as a continual quality, using the *-ing* gerund. Either way, the action should pair with an outcome. The outcome can be general, as in the examples below, or highly content-specific.

### Sample Actions

#### INSPIRED BY “FUELING”

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Energizing	Igniting	Powering	Raising	Elevating
Sparking	Generating	Charging	Rising	Creating
Pushing	Building	Cultivating	Defining	Inspiring
Sustaining	Launching	Providing	Redefining	Dedicating
Nourishing	Changing	Empowering	Advancing	Shaping

### Sample Outcomes

#### INSPIRED BY “TOMORROWS”

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Dreams	Outlook	Effect	Solutions	Connections
Futures	Goals	Outcome	Cures	Preparedness
Possibilities	Impact	Success	Relationships	Security
Opportunities	Direction	Attitudes	Friendships	Hope
Destiny	Trajectory	Experience	Confidence	Success