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Copywriting

*Successful writing for design,
advertising, and marketing*

Second Edition

The art of writing great copy

Great copy that gets good results can sometimes be so simple and clear that it looks as if it's written itself. It attracts the attention of the audience, compels them to take an interest, and guides them as they decide to involve themselves. Writing copy like this is a delicate process, which is not set in stone, so the best approach is to find out what makes the most sense to you by seeing how the professionals do it.

Make sure you take a great brief

Great copy comes from a great **brief**, and receiving a brief is an active process, not a passive one. While the client or employer may feel that he or she is giving you everything that you require in the brief, it is up to you as the copywriter to take a great brief. It is common to find that the brief you're working to does not contain all of the information you need. Certain jobs require you to conduct original research, so consider bolstering your content with additional insights, facts, and figures where relevant. Google is the source of many great research adventures.

A copy brief is the one aspect of the communications process that should not involve a long chain of command. It is vital that wherever possible the writer takes his or her own brief from the person commissioning the work, and builds on this by interviewing other key people associated with the project. The golden rule in every aspect of copywriting, design, and communication is to assume nothing, and this is never more appropriate than when taking a brief. So what do you need to know before you start writing, how do you assess the quality of a brief, and how do you get to the source of your information?

Every brief has three essential elements: a profile of your target audience; clarification of the **core message** that is to be communicated; and a good reason why the target audience should be interested—what benefit does it give them? There is a lot more that can be included in a brief, but without these three key elements you cannot hope to hit the nail on the head.

The client, or employer, or whoever is giving you the brief, will not necessarily be able to provide all of the information that you will require. This brief could be one of many projects he or she is looking after and it may not be easy for him or her to stand back and see your brief as clearly as you do. The best writers will not accept a half-baked brief; they will make sure they have everything they need before they begin to write. The best way to do this is to ask "stupid" questions. It is all too easy to have a friendly meeting, discuss the brief in general, shake hands, and disappear to draft your copy. When you're halfway through your project you're likely to realize there's not enough to say, or very little substantial material to use.

When you take the brief you must challenge the briefer to provide detail, but be diplomatic. Take a collaborative approach, and put the client at ease with a phrase such as "it's a good brief, but I need to ask you a few stupid questions." You can then go through the brief and ask for clarification and expansion of the content without treading on anyone's ego. Ask for definitions of terms that seem obvious, and you may dig up all sorts of new insights.

When you've taken a full brief you can conduct further research or interviews to gather more content and help you make the decisions you need to in order to shape your copy in line with the brief, the target audience, and the overall objectives. A lot can be achieved on the Internet, and Google is as good a place to start as anywhere. Your client should be able to put you in touch with key people whom you can interview face to face, over the phone, or using e-mail.

Find the best environment for creativity

"You must be as simple, and as swift, and as penetrating as possible. And it must stem from knowledge. And you must relate that knowledge to the consumer's needs."

Bill Bernbach

Having taken your brief and gathered your raw material it is time to lock yourself away and get your creative juices flowing. It doesn't matter where or how you work, as long as you feel comfortable and can concentrate. Some writers like to be in the middle of a busy studio or office, while others prefer total solitude. Some like to use the latest IT while others prefer a pen and paper. Some are highly efficient and get off to a flying start, while others prevaricate for ever and end up burning the midnight oil in order to hit the deadline. Ultimately, creative writing involves wrestling with your mind, and, however

you manage this process, your rules are simple: never miss your deadline and never compromise the quality and integrity of your work.

Copywriting is a highly disciplined type of creative writing and many new writers are worried that they are simply not sufficiently imaginative or concept-driven to undertake this type of work. Copywriting is challenging because it exposes the writer to direct criticism and there is no hiding from the words and creative ideas you put on the page. Although the degree of creativity required does vary from brief to brief, in general 70 percent of your copywriting will be concerned with organization and decision-making, while perhaps only 30 percent of the process will require you to focus purely on the most creative aspects of your writing, so you are dealing mainly with hard facts and you are not as exposed to criticism for your conceptual thinking as you may feel.

You've put a lot of time and effort into taking a thorough brief, so make full use of it. If you have ten working hours available for writing your copy, spend seven of them relentlessly preparing and developing your raw material, processing your notes, and playing with different thoughts and ideas. The remaining three hours will be sufficient to draft your copy. The more thoroughly you process, order, and prepare your copy, the easier it will be to write. Immerse yourself fully in the project. Take on the mindset of your target audience, understand their likes and dislikes, attitudes and beliefs, and create the right viewpoint for writing to them in a clear voice that they will relate to.

There are many types of creative brief

It's your job to create the best copywriting brief possible for every copywriting project you work on, and you can't rely on your client, or your colleagues, to do this for you—although giving them a blank copywriting briefing template is a great way to get most of the work prepared in the way you need it to be before you even start.

Smaller clients will rarely have a written brief for you to follow, often because they aren't clear about what they require, just what they want to achieve—or to put it another way, they know the results they are looking for but they don't know how to create them. In this case you will need to interrogate them to find out the information you need to create great copy. This could be in the form of a one-to-one meeting across a desk or, if you've got the confidence, could be an interactive workshop with a group of people. Once you've gathered your information (following the checklist on the opposite page) write this up and give it back to the client to check, amend, and approve.

There are usually three main types of written brief involved with your copywriting process: the client's creative brief; the studio's creative brief (this could be an internal, in-house team or an external creative agency); and your copywriting brief. The client's creative brief is likely to be fairly generalized, more a set of instructions, but it will have deadlines and should identify the key **milestones**, **sign-offs**, and **stakeholders**. The studio brief will be prepared by an account manager (if agency) or marketing manager (if client) for the creatives, with specific direction on design, media, production, budget controls, and all sorts of other stuff that you don't need to know about—as well as the messaging and copywriting (hopefully). You'll be responsible for preparing your copy brief, which should be shared with the team and client early on so they can contribute or make comments that could save you a lot of hassle later on. As the best carpenters say, “measure twice, cut once.”

Checklist: Taking a copy brief

Start with the big picture and drill down into the fine detail.

Basic details

Client's name, address, and contact details.

When was the brief taken and when is the copy needed for?

Does this relate to any previous jobs?

Will it be part of larger communications or is it stand-alone?

Overview

What is the requirement of the brief, what is the client expecting from the project and, specifically, from you?

What is the background and context for the communication (what was the previous marketing or advertising activity, and what are the reasons for doing this new brief)?

What is the timeline and when do you need to respond by?

Background and raw material

What material has the client produced before and how did it perform?

How does this campaign fit in with other communications from the client?

What is being provided as content to develop?

Are there further sources of content (by researching or interviewing)?

Target audience

Who are we trying to reach, and what route are we using?

What is their profile, and what type of people are they?

What do they think about the client?

What's going on in this marketplace—how crowded is it?

The core message

What is the single, compelling message that must be communicated?

What supporting evidence is there to back up any claims being made?

The Unique Selling Point (USP)

What benefit does the core message provide to the audience?

What makes this different and compelling in the marketplace?

Why should the reader bother to read all of the copy and respond?

Creative direction

How should the finished work look and feel?

Is there a brand style that must be adhered to?

Are there examples of similar work that can be used as a guide?

What's the most appropriate tone of voice?

Anything else?

Make sure that any directions that don't fit into the categories listed above are noted at the end of the brief. Examples would be overall word count, or the number of pages in a brochure, or how much room there is for headlines, intro paragraphs, subheadings, and a summary in an article.

The challenge of creating your first draft

“I try to get a picture in my mind of the kind of people they are—how they use this product, and what it is—they don’t often tell you in so many words—but what it is that actually motivates them to buy something or interests them in something.”

Leo Burnett

Before you begin creating your first draft, you must process and prepare the material provided in your brief, even though you may prefer to simply start writing your copy. The more work you do on it, the smoother and more polished your first draft will be. Read the brief, then reread it slowly a couple of times, taking it all in and pondering the implications of each piece of information.

Identify all of the raw material where the content overlaps and can be seamlessly linked. Lift phrases and points from the brief and note them carefully on a sheet of paper, grouping them under suitable categories such as “target audience,” “key message,” “supporting details,” and “tone of voice.” This process will extract core content from the rest of the brief and help you to identify patterns.

For example, if you’re working on a brief for a press advertisement for an antiaging beauty product launch you’ll be limited in the amount of copy you can work with, and will need to condense the raw material into very succinct points. You may be told the product’s **USP** is that it reduces the appearance of fine lines around the eyes. Elsewhere in the brief you discover the cream is very easily absorbed and allows makeup to be applied over it. In your notes you would bring these points together, using a shorthand such as: “reduces appearance of fine lines,” “easily absorbed,” “allows makeup application.”

In another category you will link together points such as availability, **price point**, and promotional offers. Your notes may say: “In supermarkets nationwide from June,” “very competitive price,” and “buy one get one free in first week.”

It is essential that you process every point from the brief, because you will be using these refined notes as the sole reference point for drafting your copy. As you progress you will reshape the content into its core elements, reducing these to a few distinct messages. These notes will give you accurate and highly condensed raw material and a focal point for your innovative creative thinking.

You can now start to make the decisions that will shape your finished copy. The decision-making responsibility that rests on a copywriter’s shoulders can be immense, and is largely overlooked. Many people may have contributed to your brief, there may be sensitivities concerning the project, and the individual stakeholders (those who will be signing off the copy or who own the overall department or product group) will have their own priorities and needs. As the writer, you may decide to lead on a single message and leave out the other points that don’t support this. This requires confidence and clear reasoning.

Consider the format you are working to and be clear on the parameters, as established in the brief, such as limited space, that will restrict you.

“Know your prospect and know your product—and know both in considerable depth.”

George Gribbin

BECOME AWARE OF NO

Idea generation is a different exercise than idea selection. So when new ideas come up, don't judge them just yet. Let them be, no matter how retarded you think they are. But if you simply cannot stop yourself, if the urge to reject them outright is stronger than the potential of an untested idea, you'd better contribute another one to take its place.

EXPAND YOUR TOOLBOX

The more you depend on a tool, the less it does for you. So let go of the mouse and pick up a pencil. And when the pencil loses its point, stop drawing and make a collage. Or even better, abandon your toolbox completely, and invent a new tool. Because sometimes a new tool is what it takes to do the job right.

Words of wisdom from the forward-thinking copywriters at the Language in Common blog, getting to the heart of the matter and showing that good copy can work just as well on a blog as it does in client marketing.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER.

*Be it the Chickadees from Chattanooga
or the Hendersons from Hattiesburg.*



Fig. 1 Noddy Green Swallow



Fig. 3 Spotted Owl



Fig. 4 Raven's Egg



Fig. 6 Yellow-billed Cuckoo



Fig. 7 Northern Flicker



Fig. 2 Green-backed Goldfinch



Fig. 5 Blue Jay

Spot a spotted owl. Whistle while you walk. Nestle in at night. Do just about anything, and go just about anywhere with an RV. Go to GoRVing.com for a free video and visit an RV dealer. **WHAT WILL YOU DISCOVER?**

Go RVing.



The evocative copy in these advertisements for recreational vehicles (RVs) captures the spirit of adventure and fun that goes with RVing. The camper van is the feature, the great outdoors is the benefit.

Spot a spotted owl. Whistle while you walk. Nestle in at night. Do just about anything, and go just about anywhere with an RV. Go to GoRVing.com for a free video and visit an RV dealer. What will you discover? *Go RVing.*

Ideal for visiting
QUIET, OUT-OF-THE-WAY PLACES
like + 89° 15' 50.794"



Fig. 1 Saturn *Fig. 2 Asteroid belt* *Fig. 3 Mercury* *Fig. 4 Neptune*
Fig. 5 Phases of the Moon *Fig. 6 Mars* *Fig. 7 Jupiter*

Marvel over the Milky Way. Hop aboard Saturn's rings. Count your lucky stars that you can do just about anything, just about anywhere with an RV. Go to GoRVing.com for a free video and visit an RV dealer. **WHAT WILL YOU DISCOVER?** *Go RVing.*



Marvel over the Milky Way. Hop aboard Saturn's rings. Count your lucky stars that you can do just about anything, just about anywhere with an RV. Go to GoRVing.com for a free video and visit an RV dealer. What will you discover? *Go RVing.*

**You're four times
It's hard to
more likely to
concentrate on
have a crash
two things
when you're on
at the same time.
a mobile phone.**

It's illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving. From February 27th 2007 you will receive a £60 fine and three penalty points on your licence.



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This copy walks the walk: not only does it explain how dangerous it is to use your phone when you're driving, it demonstrates how confusing it is to try and do two things at the same time—it's a double-hit for the reader.

Creating the concept behind your solution

The 30 percent of your time that you'll spend on the creative thinking side of your writing (having spent the other 70 percent on preparing and organizing your raw material) is where you can have the most fun as a writer, but flights of fantasy are very risky. Make sure you have a technique for keeping your train of thought on brief and for checking that your ideas are on track too, once you've finalized them. Focus on building a profile of your audience by establishing what type of people they are. Depending on the target your client gives you, this may be a very defined description or a wide spectrum—either way you must create in your mind a sense of who they are and what “makes them tick.”

Conceptualizing is all about lateral thinking—following thought patterns that lead you into new territories where you can create messages that ring true for the reader and which deliver the content so effectively that they get a great response (positive reactions from the audience, leading to practical actions to the benefit of the client). Where do you get your ideas from? They're right there in your notes.

First of all, look for word plays, phrases, or suggestions in the key words in your briefing notes and note them all down without worrying what you're going to do with them. Sometimes a good phrase or message will jump out straight away and can form the center of a headline and approach to your **body copy**, but the ideas that come to you most readily are likely to be clichés or, if not, will have been used already in similar situations. You usually have to work past your first and second rounds of ideas, even though they are good or great, and push yourself into your third or fourth round of ideas before you are in truly original territory.

Next, identify the features and follow your train of thought on the associated benefits, and really take this to the limit. Everything useful has a benefit to someone, so start by identifying this, and then push yourself to think of even more detailed benefits. Try thinking in obscure corners, set your imagination free to roam into strange places, consider the cause and effect of each feature and benefit in surreal ways. You don't need to come up with a brilliantly creative headline or theme because sometimes a simple message is the best solution, but at the same time there should be no limits to your thinking at this stage. Anything goes, and often what seem to be the craziest ideas can be shaped into the most compelling messages.

There are many ways of conceptualizing or “brainstorming” and all are valid. A lot of writers can come up with good ideas and proposals, but the trick is to know which idea is the one your client should invest his multi-million-dollar budget in. After conceptualizing, take a break and return to your notes with a more rational (and less lateral) mind. This is where you go back to the process side of your copywriting, by returning to the brief and the notes you've prepared and checking how accurately your concepts fit the intended direction. You could categorize by type, so that the client can see the structure—for example, headline ideas might follow certain themes that can be grouped together. Be strict with yourself and cut out anything but the really good, or really weird, suggestions, making sure that each is on-brief, or if not on-brief then so striking and different that it still delivers the requirements of the brief.

“If you have all the research, all the ground rules, all the directives, all the data—it doesn't mean the ad is written. Then you've got to close the door and write something—that is the moment of truth which we all try to postpone as long as possible.”

David Ogilvy

Editing—your secret weapon in the struggle for clarity

No copywriter drafts finished copy at the first sitting. The secret to great writing is the way you edit your original draft, regardless of whether your text is two short paragraphs or 2000 words in length. The process of reviewing and



The Rolls-Royce Phantom III, 1936.

“At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock”

What makes Rolls-Royce the best car in the world? “There is really no magic about it—it is merely patient attention to detail,” says an eminent Rolls-Royce engineer.

1. An 80-horsepower engine is mounted on the electric clock, supported by the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock.

2. The Rolls-Royce engine is mounted on the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock.

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28. The Rolls-Royce engine is mounted on the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock.



Two common engine pistons.

THE ENGINEERS ARE NOT WORRIED

Rolls-Royce engineers are not worried about the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock. The engine is mounted on the electric clock.

Special showing of the Rolls-Royce and Bentley at Saffers Automotives Imports, Inc., 9000 Carnegie Ave., Newswen through April 26.

In this classic long-copy ad from the 1950s, the benefit-led approach came directly from the raw material provided in the brief. David Ogilvy wrote 26 different headlines for this advertisement, and then asked half a dozen

writers from his agency to go over them and pick out the best one. He then wrote about 3500 words of copy and had three or four other writers go over it to cut out the dull and obscure parts and reduce the overall word count.

revising your copy can transform it from well-written, logical text into a highly compelling proposition.

There are a few rules to editing. It is usually the case that shorter is better. This is not to say that short, punchy copy is always more effective than long, carefully constructed arguments; however, whatever length you're writing to, you should be concise and to the point, and avoid repetition or unnecessary text.



Look into my eyes and follow my lead. When you're editing copy there is never any room for mercy. If it can go it must go—it's do or die.

Be merciless, like Ming. If you've included statements that make similar points, parallel arguments, or lengthy descriptions, they have to go. Your remaining copy will be tighter, easier to read, and more effective. Less is usually more, and you should follow the mantra "if it can go it should go," without being precious about your beautifully crafted paragraphs. Your reader will not tolerate waffle, lack of structure, unfocused messages, or ambiguity, and even concise copy can lose a bit more if you are truly merciless.

Never repeat words—there are always alternatives. If you can't find a single word to replace one you've already used, use a description instead, or rephrase the sentence. Replace long, obscure words with shorter ones that are in general usage, cut down wordy sentences, and avoid anything that clutters your core message. Be ruthless with yourself when assessing whether your copy is truly on-brief, targeted, and benefit-led. If you're not this hard on yourself, others will be before the text is approved.

What to do with your early drafts

It's likely that there will be a number of interested parties who will wish to comment on, revise, edit, and amend your original text. Always remember that although you are creating the copy you do not own it and will have to accept direction, even if you think that it compromises your work. You can always argue your point, but only by referring back to the brief and your tone-of-voice guide for justification. Remember that the views of these critics are valid and must be incorporated, or at least considered.


So don't keep your copy hidden away until it is finely tuned and highly polished. Identify the stakeholders in the project and consider the value of involving them at an early stage. Your stakeholders will be in the client team, and are usually the people who brief you. Work with them as closely as you can. Their senior managers are sometimes referred to as project "sponsors." They may have the ultimate sign-off, so try to ensure that they are kept up to speed during the development stages.

"Some of our best successes have been in industries that I knew nothing about."


Leo Burnett

Share the overall brief (and your copy brief, if there is a separate one) with your stakeholders and ask them to approve it. Any comments or directions that they have can then be incorporated from the very start, and you can explain how you will be approaching the copy in order to deliver the correct solution. When working on larger projects you should check in with these key people as you progress. Show them your rough concepts and test their reactions, discuss your approaches with them to see which one they prefer, and incorporate their thoughts into your final draft as you see fit.

There is no room for anyone on the team to have personal opinions, only professional opinions. It is not acceptable for a 50-year-old marketing director to tell you that he or she "doesn't like" a headline that is targeted at 18- to 25-year-old men. "Not liking" is not a valid criticism. If he or she tells you that the headline is poor because, in his or her opinion, "men aged 18 to 25 won't buy into it because it doesn't relate to their lifestyle," there may be a case and you can discuss this. This is a sensitive area and you may need to be subtle in your approach—try saying that he or she is not in the core target audience and personal opinions are not necessarily valid, and see how far this gets you.



DON'T LET DRUG DEALERS CHANGE THE FACE OF YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD.
Call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

 **METROPOLITAN POLICE** *Working for a safer London.*

A subtle play on words creates a very powerful and accessible headline, but here the copy plays second fiddle to the very moving imagery.

Getting that all-important sign-off

It is important to understand the psychology of approving creative work, and to use techniques to achieve sign-off that don't involve watching your work being pulled apart.

Consider the attitude of those signing off your copy. In the words of the great Edward de Bono, we all live in a critical society, we are trained from birth to criticize, and it is very rare to find constructive feedback in any field. Most of us find it easy to knock things. We always know what we don't like, and we tend to highlight problems and issues rather than build on the elements that we do like. Unfortunately, we rarely have a natural capacity to build constructively on concepts and are rarely clear about what we do like—being precise makes it too easy to be criticized by others! It is unrealistic to expect to show a senior figure some creative work, ask for an opinion, and emerge unscathed. Negative criticism is human nature.

Once your senior players are looking at your finished copy, observe their behavior. If they pick up a pen when they start to read your copy, you can politely remind them that they may not need to red-pen the text, that the copy has been carefully crafted and that their role is to check for factual accuracy (content) and not for style. They will have opinions on style and tone, and these can be discussed, but make it clear that you're not actually inviting them to write copy themselves by amending your text.

Present yourself in the best light

Sometimes you will be presenting your copy to a colleague (possibly a fellow designer, or a creative director or account manager) and at other times you may be presenting your work to a client during the project's development or as part of a competitive pitch against other designers and writers. One technique that may assist you in this involves breaking a lot of the rules already laid down here.

The golden rule is to ensure that your work is on-brief. However, when you line up a collection of different creatives in a pitch situation, and they all adhere rigidly to the brief, the resulting solutions are likely to have similarities of tone, look, and feel, especially where the brief has been conservative. One technique for winning a pitch in this scenario is to go off-brief and present highly creative, forward-thinking, and impressive solutions that show some wider possibilities.

Think of this as your runway approach. Karl Lagerfeld sends his Chanel models down the runway in amazing and stunning creations that the core Chanel customer couldn't seriously contemplate wearing. Yet the customer is inspired by the designs, which appear in all of the magazines because they are so newsworthy, and will visit Chanel to buy her twinsets and handbags. If Lagerfeld were to send his models out wearing these twinsets and handbags the fashion press would say he was losing his touch.

For your runway approach you need to show your client what you can do if you are unrestricted by a brief, and what they might consider if they felt like taking a lead in the marketplace. To avoid the risk of missing the mark entirely, present at least two fully worked-up concepts, one that is completely on-brief, hitting all of the requirements squarely on the head, and another that is your runway showpiece. Do this well and you will stand out from the competition for your confidence, your skill, and your creativity. Don't show too many options.

Manage your copy through to sign-off

“A lot of copywriters think they're good judges of their own work. I know I'm not.”

David Ogilvy

There is an art to presenting your copy, whether informally to a colleague or formally to a major client. It is often the case that the best copy solutions, using clear messages to communicate simple concepts, can be underappreciated or undervalued by the client, especially if you're presenting the copy as word-processed documents in isolation from the design concept. The best way to present copy in this format is to include some basic typesetting. Make the headline larger and center it, lay out the page in landscape, give some prominence to the lead paragraph, and ensure your typography is clear and well laid out.

You must be confident but not arrogant. Set the work in context by quickly summarizing the brief and your approach to it and saying what you have done:

Checklist: Assessing copy

- Does it answer the written brief?
- Is it interesting or compelling?
- Can you reduce the word count?
- Does it run in the right order?
- Do you believe the message?
- Does it tie in with the design concept?
- Does it include a clear call to action?
- Is it using the reader's language?
- Is there a better way of doing it?
- Maybe it's time to stop now?

“I’ve got three concepts, two of which I feel are on-brief, and another that explores the other options open to us.”

Always finish on a high note, which means saving the work that you consider to be your best until the end. If you show your most stunning and creative work at the start, everything else you reveal will seem like a comedown. Begin with the most solid and reliable concepts, and sell them confidently, with a great deal of enthusiasm—as if you feel this is your ultimate solution. Show how it answers everything in the brief and point out the structure and techniques that you have incorporated. The client will feel confident that you know what you are doing, and should be pleased with the proposal, because it answers the brief.

As you reveal each concept, continue with your enthusiastic and positive approach, taking care not to show off or appear overconfident. Ask for reactions and opinions and build rapport during the meeting. By the time you reach your runway showpiece the client will have had plenty of stimulating material to consider. The brief has been answered but even more solutions are being presented. Whether this final piece is liked or not is irrelevant; its role is to show unrestrained creativity, make you stand out from the competition, and prevent them from outshining you. Explain that although you are totally confident in the recommended solutions, this is conceptual work, and the real solution will incorporate the client’s direction and thinking.

Once your initial presentations are completed, you will probably have a number of work-in-progress meetings where the client and others will have opportunities to make changes to your text. This can become very political, and you must take a purely professional approach to this. The client will know the target customer and the products or services in far more detail than you, and you will have to pay close attention to this direction. However, the client will often be too close to the project to be objective, will rarely have enough experience of creative writing and design to genuinely lead its development, and may make suggestions simply to challenge your confidence or test whether you’re taking a chance with the product.

The way to handle client comments is to relate everything back to the target audience, core message, and USP that are being highlighted. If the client’s suggestion improves these, build it in; if not, prepare a clear explanation of why you wish to override it. If you find yourself in an impasse, go with the client’s views. There is no point fighting to the death; it makes a lot more sense to go with the recommendations, make the best job of it that you can, and live to fight another day.



Exercise: familiarizing yourself with a good brief

Type in the criteria listed on “Taking a copy brief” on page 27 to give yourself the main headings for your briefing template.

Choose a piece of advertising or marketing that appeals to you, or look at a selection of communications material from a brand that you like.

Retro-write the brief, filling in all of the elements. You won't know all of the details, so make some up, using your common sense to second guess the client's original directions.

Once you've completed a full brief, follow the processes listed on pages 28, 33, and 35 to prepare and prioritize your raw material, then draft some new creative concepts of your own. Work with a designer if you can, or do some thinking about design yourself.

Work up your best concept as a rough **mock-up**, the same size as the original. If it's an ad, stick it in the magazine over the original. If it's a brochure, keep it next to the original.

Come back the next day and look at your work with a fresh pair of eyes. How did you do? Is your effort as good as the original? Would you show this work to a prospective employer?



Round-up

Great copy comes from a great brief; receiving a brief is an active process, not a passive one.

It doesn't matter where you work or how you work, so long as you feel comfortable and can concentrate.

Never miss your deadline and never compromise the quality and integrity of your work.

The more thoroughly you process, order, and prepare your copy, the easier it is to write.

When searching for creative inspiration, do a mini brainstorm on your own.

The secret of great writing is the way you edit your original draft.

Don't keep your copy hidden away until it is finely tuned and highly polished.

It is important to understand the psychology of approving creative work.

Show your client what you can do if you are unrestricted by a brief.

The client will have a far greater knowledge than you of the target customer and of the products or services being promoted.