

Writing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Writing

Audience always comes first.....	3
Top 10 quick tips	3
General guidelines and more info	4

Tone and voice

Voice

First- and second-person	6
Active voice	6

Tone

Relevant	7
Knowledgeable	8
Approachable.....	8

Key resources

AP Stylebook.....	9
Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary	9

Writing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key resources

Lexmark writing style exceptions and highlights

Headlines and subheads.....	10
Sentence punctuation.....	10
Captions.....	10
Headings and labels	10
Ampersands (&).....	10
Em dashes (long dashes).....	11
Use of serial or Oxford commas.....	11
Common units of measurement	11
Time and date.....	11
Search engine optimization (SEO).....	11

Writing for Lexmark blogs

Readability	12
Style	12
Other.....	12

Lexmark Terminology.....	13
--------------------------	----

No. 1 rule: Audience always comes first

One of the first rules of writing is: Know your audience. Our writing must always address the needs and wants of that audience. In most cases, our audience is our customers.

Top 10 quick tips

1. Always write for the audience.
2. Lead with the benefits and substantiate with the features.
3. Write the way you speak, in a conversational tone.
4. Be concise. Communicate only what's most important.
5. Simplify, but don't dumb it down.
6. Don't over-describe. Include only the information the audience needs to take the action we want them to take.
7. Use headlines, subheads, bulleted lists, and other display elements to break up text.
8. Aim for short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs – but in moderation.
9. Serve Lexmark, not internal subject matter experts.
10. Include a call to action (CTA) when appropriate.

General guidelines and more info

- ▶ **The audience is usually our customers.** This applies to most Lexmark communications, except for internal communications. Always ask: What's in it for the customer? Solve their problems. Show why your subject matters to them.
 - ▶ **Example:** Centralized data collection and detailed reporting about printing, copying, and scanning across your organization helps you identify problems and gain insights for informed decision making.
- ▶ **Lead with the benefits and substantiate with the features.**
 - ▶ **Example:** Lexmark's end-to-end security means you have the confidence to efficiently and effectively get the job done, knowing your printer and information are protected every step of the way. Besides durable steel frames and high performance, you get our experience, industry expertise and real-world insights inside every box.
- ▶ **Humans make buying decisions – so write business to human,** instead of business to business.
 - ▶ **Example:** Genuine Lexmark Supplies are warranted to be free from defects in materials or workmanship, or we will exchange or repair the product, giving you peace of mind.
- ▶ **Write about people doing things.** That will resonate.
 - ▶ **Example:** Just scan documents in the original language using a Lexmark MFP, select the appropriate output language, and receive a translated document within minutes.
- ▶ **Does the writing pass the skim test?** Can the reader get the information they need without reading any long paragraphs? Use bulleted and/or numbered lists (but not excessively).

General guidelines and more info

- ▶ **Focus attention on headlines, subheads and other display elements** because these are the most read.
- ▶ **Use verbs in headlines** when possible.
- ▶ **Calculate reading time** as word count divided by 200. For most writing, shorter reading times are often better.
- ▶ **Aim for sentences with 14 or fewer words** and words with five or fewer characters on average.

Voice

First- and second-person

Lexmark marketing copy, including blogs and social media posts, should be written in the first- or second-person voice to engage the reader on a more personal level. We often refer to Lexmark on first mention in copy, but where appropriate on subsequent mentions, use “we” and “our” when referring to the company.

Similarly, the use of “you” or “your” when addressing the reader is best. There are times when we refer to “organizations” to indicate a more global user base, but in general, we maintain our conversational tone by using this more informal first-person voice style.

Example: Reduce your impact on the environment and improve your bottom line.

Active voice

All copy and content should use an active voice style whenever possible. This means using active versus passive verb phrasing and keeping sentence structure concise.

Examples:

- ▶ Passive: New features are being added to the big business line of ABC printers.
- ▶ Active: ABC is adding new features to its big business printers.

Tone

Generally, we should frame our message in the context of what the customer can do with our solutions, more than focusing on what we can do for them. This means an empowering tone and strong focus on the benefits of our products and solutions.

It's important to set up the audience's specific challenge in a meaningful way but move swiftly to the solutions they can create by working with Lexmark. Though our subject may be technical or complex at times, how we communicate it should feel simple, be approachable, and be easily understood by the reader.

Lexmark is a global technology leader, and as such, we must consider the global effectiveness of all messages. Try to avoid phrases that won't translate easily to other cultures or languages.

In brief, the key brand characteristics of Lexmark writing style are:

Relevant

Copy and content should always be relevant to the reader, speaking to what specifically is important to them in their industry and daily work life, and reflective of our experience in solving their real problems. This means using familiar language/terminology and examples that speak to the unique needs and expectations of that specific audience.

Example: When it comes to security, there are no second chances. That's why more banks, governments and schools trust Lexmark to protect information on the printer, over the network and at all points in between.

Tone

Knowledgeable

Our goal is to establish Lexmark as a proven leader and problem solver. Our marketing and sales messages must strongly convey our technical aptitude, thought leadership and deep industry expertise.

Example: Lexmark Cloud Bridge technology enables expanded access to advanced managed print services without the need for additional hardware or software.

Approachable

Though our topics can be complex, how we communicate the message should be clear, direct and conversational. Write like you talk. Make word choices that are plainspoken and action-oriented, not meaningless jargon. When a shorter phrase works, use it. Use contractions unless the expanded verb has stronger meaning in your particular context.

Example: We'll bring a different kind of excitement to you – wherever you are.

Key resources

Lexmark's corporate style is based on the following reference books:

AP Stylebook

The AP Stylebook from the Associated Press is our primary reference for Lexmark writing and grammatical style guidance. Various Lexmark teams that write content (including Global Communications and Strategic Messaging in Marketing and Internal Communications in Human Resources), have a membership to the AP Stylebook Online; seek them out if you have a question about AP Style.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

Use Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as the key reference for spelling, including how to handle hyphenation in specific words. If a word has two possible spellings, use the first choice shown in the dictionary.

Lexmark writing style exceptions and highlights

Headlines and subheads

Sentence style is Lexmark's typical style, except for proper names or titles. That means only the first word, proper nouns and names should be capitalized in a headline, subhead, label or similar display type. Exception: Title case is used for news releases and blog posts, per journalistic guidelines. Use verbs in headlines when possible.

Sentence punctuation

Do not use any punctuation at the end of the headline. Punctuation may be used for full-sentence subheads. Avoid using exclamation points.

Captions

Captions are optional for graphic elements in Lexmark communications. If they are used, capitalization should follow sentence style and use appropriate punctuation.

Headings and labels

Headings or labels within a figure, chart, table or illustration can use acronyms and abbreviations if they are consistent and spelled out in the related text. They should always follow sentence case style.

Ampersands (&)

In body text, use an ampersand (&) only when it's part of a company name (e.g., AT&T) or accepted abbreviations. Ampersands should not be used in headlines.

Lexmark writing style exceptions and highlights

Em dashes (long dashes)

In body text, em dashes, or long dashes, have one space before or after the text.

Example: This year proved that change is constant - especially for retail.

Use of serial or Oxford commas

When including a simple series of three or more items in body text, do not use serial or Oxford commas (a comma placed immediately before the conjunction and, or, etc.). That said, if the series is complex, adding an Oxford comma can help with clarity.

Example: Though our subject may be technical, complicated or complex at times, how we communicate it should feel simple, be approachable, and be easily understood by the reader.

Common units of measurement

Follow AP style, including the recently adopted rule to use the % symbol and not spell out "percent."

Example: 25%.

Time and date

Follow AP style. Eliminate :00 (9-10 a.m., not 9:00-10:00 a.m.) and abbreviate months when used with a date (Dec. 10, not December 10).

Search engine optimization (SEO)

Use search engine optimization (SEO) terms when writing for the web. Consult with the Lexmark SEO team. You can also use the SEMrush Writing Assistant plug-in for Word: <https://www.semrush.com/swa>.

Writing for Lexmark blogs

Lexmark blog post copy should follow the Lexmark writing tips above and adhere to the following specific guidelines:

Readability

- ▶ [400 to 600 words](#) is the preferred word count for a blog post.
- ▶ Longer-form blog posts are less readable but may be used occasionally if needed. Search engines prefer content from [1,500 to 1,900 words](#).
- ▶ Strive for a [Readability score of 60-70](#), based on the [Flesch-Kincaid](#) readability test, which indicates the [difficulty and ease of understanding](#).
 - ▶ A readability score is easily accessed in Microsoft Word. Click on Review, then Editor and then Document stats.

Style

- ▶ Use title case for headlines and sentence case with punctuation for subheads.
- ▶ Craft a compelling headline and interesting hook to draw readers in. Revisit the hook in the conclusion.
- ▶ Use simple sentence structures, and avoid the need for excessive punctuation.
- ▶ Keep paragraphs short - roughly two to four sentences.
- ▶ Avoid heavy statistics and numbers that might confuse the reader.

Other

- ▶ Posts should be attributed to an author or subject matter expert whenever possible.
 - ▶ Use the author's name and title.
 - ▶ The author's name should link to their LinkedIn profile.
 - ▶ A brief author bio (one- to two-sentence descriptor) should be included at the end of the blog post.
- ▶ Social media is the primary driver of visitors to the Lexmark blog.
 - ▶ Write two to three suggested social media posts to drive traffic to each blog post.
 - ▶ Provide visuals for social posts.



Lexmark terminology

Representing the Lexmark brand accurately includes consistent use of key terminology, from printer models and parts naming to solution names and user interface patterns.

Third parties seeking guidance regarding terminology should consult with a member of the Lexmark messaging team.