



Finding your voice

Your identity: Who are you?

1. Basic facts

What's your history?	
Where are you based?	
Are there any interesting or unique moments in your history?	
What kind of activities or events do you run?	
What products or experiences do you sell?	
Who is your audience or community?	
What prompted the creation of your organisation?	
Why do you do what you do? What is your purpose or mission?	

2. Brand statement:

Draft one to two sentences that encapsulate what you do and why you exist.

E.g. Our gallery champions underrepresented voices, challenges assumptions, and makes experimental art accessible to all. Our purpose is to connect people through bold ideas and new ways of seeing.



Your personality: How do you behave?

3. What is your positioning, and emotional connection with your audience?

What makes you different from others in your space?	
Why do audiences come to you (not others)?	
How do you want people to feel after interacting with you?	
If your brand were a person, how would people describe them?	

4. Create an imaginary character to represent your brand:

- How do they like to dress?
- What music do they listen to?
- Where and how do they interact with your key audiences?
- What do they often think about?

E.g. This character is larger than life, and will wave you over to introduce you to someone new - one of their wide network of friends. They're colourful, always wearing bright clothing, and they're optimistic; they believe their purpose in life is to improve the world and they want others to do the same. But they're serious when they need to be, especially for topics that concern them deeply, and aren't shy about sharing their opinion, even if it makes people uncomfortable.



Your voice: How do you express yourself?

5. If your brand character was a real person, how would they speak? (Be specific!)

- Where might they be found? *(At a fancy dinner party; on stage at a conference; on a walk in a park; in a museum gift shop...)*
- Who would they be talking to?
- What would they be talking about?
- How would they be speaking? *(Loud or quiet; warm or sharp; serious or playful)*
- How would they tell a story? *(Exaggerated, analytical, witty; concise)*

E.g. This character might be hosting a zine-making workshop, speaking to a new student who has just joined. They're going on tangents, telling stories about their life or interesting facts. They want to be as positive and welcoming as possible, especially when giving feedback on someone's work: they'll say things like "there's no right or wrong way to do this". But they're not cheeky or silly, and they take themselves seriously when needed, especially when the conversation turns to a sensitive or important topic.

6. Write 5-6 adjectives* that describe your ideal voice, or personality traits that align with your brand character:

E.g. Energetic; storyteller; vivid; charismatic; authentic; bold

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Tips:

- If it helps, think of traits that are negative or opposite to your imaginary character, and then find the word that fits the reverse.
- You could also think about real people you know or celebrities to help flesh out these adjectives.

*Watch out for general brand attributes here, like professional, honest, or friendly - unless they are a really core part of your brand. Most organisations wouldn't want to be seen as unprofessional! Think of these like 'hygiene factors' - useful to bear in mind when writing copy, not so useful as a personality trait.

7. Create three voice elements, based on your previous exercises.

E.g.:

Vivid storyteller - loves to tell stories, and sometimes exaggerates

Bold and authentic - isn't afraid to show their colours

Grounded optimism - brings positivity and welcoming energy

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Tips:

- Look for patterns in your traits which could shape how your brand expresses itself. (E.g. *vivid + storyteller = a sense of expression, narrative, and colour. → Vivid storyteller*)
- Revisit your mission and purpose - do your voice elements align? (E.g. *"champions underrepresented voices" = vivid storyteller; "challenges assumptions" = bold and authentic; connect people through new ways of seeing = "grounded optimism"*)



Bringing it to life

Now that you have your voice, you need to make it easy to use and consistent.

8. Brand voice guidelines

Item	Explanation	Answer
Introduction and philosophy	<i>Why does voice matter to your organisation? How do you use it to reach your audiences? What journey did you take to arrive at this voice?</i>	
Voice attribute #1	<i>Refer to exercise 7</i>	
Meaning & aim	<i>Why is this attribute important for your brand voice? How does it help you interact with audiences? E.g. "We use vivid storytelling to foster a sense of intrigue, build new understandings, and generate an emotional connection with our audience."</i>	
Shown through:	<i>How might this attribute come across in your everyday communications? Is there any specific wording that comes to mind? E.g. "vivid storyteller" comes across through long-form copy that paints a narrative, using anecdotes and metaphors"; "bold and authentic uses punchy, confident statements, and words</i>	



	<i>like “reimagine” or “challenge”</i>	
Dial up for:	<i>Which platforms, channels, or types of messaging does this work best for? E.g. Instagram, TikTok, newsletters, website blogs.</i>	
Dial down for:	<i>Where should this voice element be avoided? E.g. campaigns, ads, event pages, booking journeys.</i>	
Do say:	<i>Example(s) of the correct way to use this attribute.</i>	
Don't say:	<i>Example(s) of writing that wouldn't work for this attribute.</i>	
Voice attribute #2		
Meaning & aim		
Shown through:		
Dial up for:		
Dial down for:		
Do say:		
Don't say:		
Voice attribute #3		
Meaning & aim		
Shown through:		
Dial up for:		
Dial down for:		
Do say:		



Don't say:		
Editorial style		
Formatting	<i>Rules for formatting: headings, bullet points, emoji use, capitalisation, date formats, numbers, hyperlinks, hashtags</i>	
Grammar & language	<i>Rules for writing: xford commas, sentence lengths, use of punctuation e.g. exclamation marks, emojis, acronyms, technical jargon</i>	
Accessibility & inclusivity	<i>Rules for accessibility: how do you avoid jargon, writing alt text, what constitutes plain English</i>	
Words to use or avoid	<i>This can evolve as you learn more about what works and doesn't work for your voice</i>	
Workflows	<i>Review stages, AI guidelines</i>	

9. Checklist: Keeping your brand voice consistent

- Have you received stakeholder input & approval?
- Have you created a concise summary version of your brand voice guidelines?
- Has it been shared with and explained to the whole team?
- If needed, have you developed tailored voice guidelines for specific team members?
(E.g. customer service reps versus social media manager)
- Have you trained the relevant members of your team?
- Have you built it into your processes using review checklists?
- Have you set a date to revisit the voice guidelines to see what's working and what's not, or to refresh yourselves? (Around once a year)