



Tone of Voice and Content Style Guide

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What is Our Tone of Voice?

Tone of voice is how our brand communicates: how it expresses itself. The words it uses, the formality of its message, and the personality it brings to the communication all contribute to Cere's tone of voice.

Cere's voice is the consistent character readers should recognize across website copy, product content, educational materials, support messages, investor communications, newsletters, and social media. Its tone changes according to the audience, subject, channel, and situation.

For example, we should not rely on slang understood only within crypto and blockchain communities when writing for a general audience. Cere wants to bring people into the conversation, not make them feel that they arrived too late to understand it. Use the correct technical term when it adds precision, then define it when the reader may not know it.

As you read this guide, picture Cere as a technically capable and approachable guide. Cere explains difficult subjects without showing off, makes claims at the level the evidence supports, and tells readers what they need to know or do next.

Before writing, identify: who will read the content, what they can reasonably be expected to know, what they need to understand or do, which terms require explanation, how certain the information is, and which conditions or limitations belong beside the main statement.

See our Brand Style Guide for information on color and logo usage.

Summary

This guide covers detailed editorial and interface rules. Writers who need a quick reference can use the Summary section, but the full guidance governs whenever a subject requires more detail.

Why does tone of voice matter?

A distinguishable and consistent voice helps Cere communicate clearly in a crowded technology market. It gives readers a recognizable experience across channels and helps different writers make compatible decisions.

Peep Laja, CEO of Wynter, describes the pressure clearly:

"There have never been as many brands as there are today. [...] That means that what used to be good enough effort is not enough anymore."

A challenger can compete through meaningful product differences and through a brand people recognize and trust. For Cere, those two areas should reinforce each other. Our writing should explain what the technology does, how it differs, and why that difference matters rather than relying on louder marketing.

Consistency helps readers understand who is speaking. Accuracy and specificity help them decide whether to trust what is being said. This matters when Cere communicates with developers, enterprises, partners, community members, investors, and people who may be new to decentralized technology.

A distinct voice is not a license to force personality into every sentence. The message should still suit the reader's situation. Product copy may be concise and confident, documentation exact and task-focused, support calm and direct, and investor communication formal and evidence-led.

The practical test is simple: Can the reader tell what Cere is discussing, what is verified, why it matters, and what to do next?

General Guidelines

We are clear

- Clear is: simple, concise, direct, specific, and understandable.
- Clear is not: unexplained jargon, vague benefits, missing context, patronizing explanations, or technical detail included only to impress.

We understand that our readers have limited time and different levels of knowledge. Lead with the main point, function, result, or required action. Name the subject and action, define unfamiliar terms, and place requirements or limitations beside the statement they affect.

Less clear: *Cere provides a seamless data experience for the next era of the internet.*

Clearer pattern: *[Product or feature] lets [audience] [verified action] by [verified mechanism]. It currently requires [condition, if applicable].*

We are genuine

- Genuine is: honest, upfront, accurate, factual, and appropriately qualified.
- Genuine is not: misleading certainty, hidden conditions, unsupported claims, or presenting plans as current functions.

State facts directly and at the correct level of certainty. Distinguish among what exists now, what has been announced, what is being tested, and what Cere expects or intends. Support product, performance, adoption, market, partnership, and comparison claims with an approved source.

We are friendly

- Friendly is: human, personable, attentive, calm, professional, and respectful.
- Friendly is not: overly familiar, forced, flippant, dismissive, or full of enthusiasm that does not fit the situation.

Write like a helpful person rather than a corporate script. Contractions and light humor can work in informal channels, but clarity comes first. Do not use humor in

service incidents, security or privacy communications, legal content, warnings, complaints, or frustrated support exchanges.

We challenge conventional wisdom in a respectful way

Cere can explain limitations in centralized systems or other established approaches, but the comparison must be specific. Focus on the problem, the mechanism Cere uses, and the supported result. Do not demean competing products, the people who built them, or the organizations that still use them.

Avoid: *Conventional platforms are broken and Cere is superior.*

Use this pattern: *[Established approach] can create [specific limitation] in [defined context]. [Cere product or feature] addresses that limitation through [verified mechanism].*

We adjust our tone as appropriate

Write in a way that suits the audience, channel, subject, and emotional context. A migration guide, service interruption, social post, investor update, and legal notice should not all sound alike. The underlying voice remains clear, credible, respectful, and human.

We are useful

Our communication should help the reader understand something, make a decision, or complete a task. Before writing, ask: What purpose does this serve? Who will read it? What do they already know? What must they know? What should they do next?

Do not add a call to action simply because the content is promotional. Give a next step when it follows naturally from the reader's purpose, and name the exact page, document, button, command, or process involved.

Writing Goals and Principles

Every piece of content we publish should:

- **Empower.** Help people understand Cere and use our products by giving them accurate information, necessary context, and a clear next step.
- **Respect.** Treat readers as capable people. Consider their knowledge, time, needs, and likely state of mind. Do not patronize them or market at them.
- **Educate.** Tell readers what they need to know, not only what Cere wants to say. Explain unfamiliar concepts, preserve meaningful technical distinctions, and provide a path to more detail.

- **Guide.** Help readers move through a task, decision, or subject in a logical order. Use exact interface labels and ordered steps when the content is procedural.
- **Speak truth.** Focus on Cere's verified strengths. Separate current functions from plans, expectations, and tests. State conditions, risks, and limitations where the reader needs them.

These principles should result in visible editorial choices. Lead with the reader's need, explain benefits through mechanisms, use one term consistently for each concept, support claims, and remove material that does not help the reader understand or act.

Cere can question established technology while remaining credible to enterprises, partners, and other organizations that operate within existing systems. Explain the difference without turning the message into rebellion for its own sake.

Voice and Tone

Voice and tone work together. Voice is the consistent character of Cere's communication. Tone is how that voice adapts to a particular reader and situation.

You have the same voice when speaking with a friend and in a formal meeting, but you change your tone. Cere works the same way. The voice stays recognizable; the degree of formality, warmth, detail, urgency, and restraint changes.

Consider both the content and the reader's likely emotional state. Someone completing a successful setup needs a different tone from someone who cannot access a service, is reviewing an investment statement, or is trying to understand a technical concept for the first time.

Voice

Voice is the consistent personality and attitude readers experience when they interact with a company or product. It should remain recognizable across channels, regardless of the subject or occasion.

Cere should sound like a technically capable guide speaking to smart readers with different levels of experience in blockchain and decentralized technology. We explain difficult subjects without assuming prior knowledge, but we do not replace precision with vague marketing language.

We educate without patronizing or confusing people. Whether a reader already knows what they need or is encountering Cere for the first time, our writing should inform, orient, and help them continue.

When we write copy:

- **We are plainspoken.** Use familiar words, concrete verbs, and direct sentences. Avoid filler, inflated language, and metaphors that distract from the function or fact.
- **We are technically credible.** Use correct terminology, preserve meaningful distinctions, and state requirements and limitations. Expertise should appear through accuracy and explanation, not density.
- **We are genuine.** Use a familiar, warm, and accessible style without pretending to know what every reader feels or needs. State uncertainty and incomplete information openly.
- **We are translators.** Make complex ideas easier to understand while preserving their meaning. Define a specialized term when it is necessary, then use it consistently.
- **We are constructively challenging.** Explain the limits of established approaches and Cere's alternative without insulting competitors or making unsupported claims of superiority.

How Cere's Voice Sounds in Practice

Too vague: *Cere is changing everything about how businesses use data.*

Cere pattern: *[Product or feature] lets [audience] [verified action]. It does this through [verified mechanism].*

Too technical without explanation: *Initialize the SDK to instantiate the client-side data layer.*

Cere pattern: *Install the SDK, then create a client. The client connects your application to [approved service or network description].*

Too insider-focused: *GM, frens. This release is huge.*

Cere pattern: *[Release or feature] is now available. Here is what changed and where to find the documentation.*

Too absolute: *Cere gives every business complete control of its data.*

Cere pattern: *[Product or feature] lets [audience] control [specific function] through [verified mechanism]. State any requirements or limits beside the claim.*

Tone

Tone refers to the mood and manner of a particular communication. Unlike voice, it is contextual. It changes according to what we are writing about, who will read it, what the reader needs, and how the reader may feel.

Cere's tone usually sits between conversational and semi-formal. Clarity matters more than entertainment. Humor is acceptable when it suits the channel and arises naturally, but forced humor is worse than none. When unsure, keep the message straightforward.

Tone by Context

- **Product and brand content:** Confident, concise, and explanatory. Lead with the verified function or benefit rather than excitement about the announcement.
- **Developer documentation:** Neutral, exact, and task-focused. Use consistent terms, keep steps in order, and reproduce interface labels and commands exactly.
- **Support and community replies:** Calm, respectful, and direct. Acknowledge the problem, state what is known, provide the next step, and do not blame the user.
- **Incidents and maintenance notices:** Factual and accountable. State what is affected, when the issue began, what the team is doing, and when the next update will appear. Do not joke or speculate.
- **Investor and corporate communications:** Formal, evidence-led, and qualified. Distinguish current results from forecasts and provide a source and reporting period for figures.
- **Social media:** Conversational and concise without depending on insider slang. Give the reader a useful fact, explanation, or link rather than excitement without substance.

Product announcement, weak: *We're thrilled to announce a major leap forward for the Cere ecosystem!*

Product announcement, stronger: *We've released [feature]. It lets [audience] [verified action]. Read the release notes for setup instructions, requirements, and current limitations.*

Support reply, weak: *Oops! Something went wrong. Hang tight while we fix it.*

Support reply, stronger: *We're investigating reports that [feature] is unavailable. You do not need to repeat the request. We'll post the next update by [time and time zone].*

Documentation, weak: *Once everything is ready, configure it and connect to the network.*

Documentation, stronger: *Open [page or tool name], select [setting], enter [required value], and then select Connect.*

Style Tips

The following choices help writers apply Cere's voice. See Grammar and Mechanics for detailed house style.

- **Prefer active voice.** Name the actor when it helps the reader understand responsibility or action. Passive voice is acceptable when the actor is unknown, unimportant, or deliberately omitted for a valid reason. Do not create awkward sentences merely to avoid it.
- **Use technical terms carefully.** Use a specialized term when it is more precise than a general substitute. Define it when the audience may not recognize it, and do not alternate among several terms for the same concept merely to avoid repetition.
- **Use constructive and direct language.** Tell readers what they can do and how to proceed. Do not use positive wording to hide a restriction, error, risk, or other information the reader needs.
- **Prefer specific verbs.** Describe the actual action instead of saying a product empowers, transforms, unlocks, or changes an experience without explaining how.
- **Match certainty to evidence.** Use present tense for current functions, future or conditional wording for plans, and explicit labels for tests or previews.
- **Use contractions according to context.** They can make website, email, support, and social copy sound natural. Reduce or avoid them in legal documents and formal communications that require exact interpretation.
- **Use humor sparingly.** It may suit informal community or social content when it supports the message. Never make the reader or their mistake the subject of the joke.

Less direct: *New controls can be accessed from the dashboard.*

More direct: *Open the dashboard to access the new controls.*

Vague benefit: *Cere empowers creators to unlock new possibilities.*

Specific pattern: *[Product] lets creators [verified action] through [verified mechanism].*

Writing about Cere

Do not divide, modify, or combine the Cere name to create unofficial product, service, program, campaign, or feature names. Avoid puns that depend on changing the company name.

Cere is derived from “cerebellum,” the part of the brain associated with coordinating voluntary movement, and the logo is an abstract representation of a brain. Use this origin only when it is relevant to an approved brand explanation or campaign. Do not routinely use brain imagery, describe products as “smart” solely because of the name, or suggest that people who choose Cere are more intelligent than others.

Do not borrow another company’s imagery, slogans, or naming patterns to explain Cere. When comparison is necessary, compare specific functions or approaches using supported information.

See Writing About Cere in Grammar and Mechanics for legal names, company references, product naming, capitalization, and claims.

Writing about people

We write the same way we build apps: with a person-first perspective. Whether you’re writing for an internal or external audience, it’s important to write for and about other people in a way that’s compassionate, inclusive, and respectful. Being aware of the impact of your language will help make Cere a better place to work and a better steward of our values in the world. In this section we’ll lay out some guidelines for writing about people with compassion and share some resources for further learning.

As part of an audience

- Don’t capitalize “audience” unless it’s grammatically necessary.
- Don’t refer to an audience as “it.” Audiences are made up of real people, so always use “they.”
- This goes for contacts, too. Contacts are real people, never pieces of data.

Age

Don’t reference a person’s age unless it’s relevant to what you’re writing. If it *is* relevant, include the person’s specific age, offset by commas.

- The CEO, 16, just got her driver’s license.

Don’t refer to people using age-related descriptors like “young,” “old,” or “elderly.”

Disability

Avoid disability-related idioms like “lame” or “falling on deaf ears.” Don’t refer to a person’s disability unless it’s relevant to what you’re writing. If you need to mention it, ask whether your subject prefers person-first language (“they have a disability”) or identity-first language (“they are disabled”).

When writing about a person with disabilities, don't use the words "suffer," "victim," or "handicapped." "Handicapped parking" is OK.

Gender and sexuality

Don't call groups of people "guys." Don't call women "girls."

Avoid gendered terms in favor of neutral alternatives, like "server" instead of "waitress" and "businessperson" instead of "businessman."

It's OK to use "they" as a singular pronoun.

Use the following words as modifiers, but never as nouns:

- lesbian
- gay
- bisexual
- transgender (never "transgendered")
- trans
- queer
- LGBT

Don't use these words in reference to LGBT people or communities:

- homosexual
- lifestyle
- preference

Don't use "same-sex" marriage, unless the distinction is relevant to what you're writing. (Avoid "gay marriage.") Otherwise, it's just "marriage."

When writing about a person, use their communicated pronouns. When in doubt, just ask or use their name.

Hearing

Use "deaf" as an adjective to describe a person with significant hearing loss. You can also use "partially deaf" or "hard of hearing."

Heritage and nationality

Don't use hyphens when referring to someone with dual heritage or nationality. For example, use "Asian American" instead of "Asian-American."

Medical conditions

Don't refer to a person's medical condition unless it's relevant to what you're writing.

If a reference to a person's medical condition is warranted, use the same rules as writing about people with physical disabilities and emphasize the person first. Don't call a person with a medical condition a "victim."

Mental and cognitive conditions

Don't refer to a person's mental or cognitive condition unless it's relevant to what you're writing. Never assume that someone has a medical, mental, or cognitive condition.

Don't describe a person as "mentally ill." If a reference to a person's mental or cognitive condition is warranted, use the same rules as writing about people with physical disabilities or medical conditions and emphasize the person first.

Race

At Cere, when we write about a culture or ethnicity, we capitalize the name. For example, we capitalize Black as it refers to Americans in the African diaspora while we keep white lowercase since white refers to the color of a person's skin and not a group of people.

Vision

Use the adjective "blind" to describe a person who is unable to see. Use "low vision" to describe a person with limited vision.

Grammar and Mechanics

Adhering to certain rules of grammar and mechanics helps us keep our writing clear and consistent. This section will lay out our house style, which applies to all of our content unless otherwise noted in this guide. (We cover a lot of ground in this section—the search feature will help if you're looking for something in particular.)

Basics

Write for all readers. Some people will read every word you write. Others will just skim. Help everyone read better by grouping related ideas together and using descriptive headers and subheaders.

Focus your message. Create a hierarchy of information. Lead with the main point or the most important content, in sentences, paragraphs, sections, and pages.

Be concise. Use short words and sentences. Avoid unnecessary modifiers.

Be specific. Avoid vague language. Cut the fluff.

Be consistent. Stick to the copy patterns and style points outlined in this guide.

Guidelines

Abbreviations and acronyms

If there's a chance your reader won't recognize an abbreviation or acronym, spell it out the first time you mention it. Then use the short version for all other references. If the abbreviation isn't clearly related to the full version, specify in parentheses.

- First use: Network Operations Center
- Second use: NOC
- First use: Coordinated Universal Time (UTC)
- Second use: UTC

If the abbreviation or acronym is well known, like API or HTML, use it instead (and don't worry about spelling it out).

Active voice

Use active voice. Avoid passive voice.

In active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action. In passive voice, the subject of the sentence has the action done to it.

- Yes: Marti logged into the account.
- No: The account was logged into by Marti.

Words like "was" and "by" may indicate that you're writing in passive voice. Scan for these words and rework sentences where they appear.

One exception is when you want to specifically emphasize the action over the subject. In some cases, this is fine.

- Your account was flagged by our Abuse team.

Capitalization

We use a few different forms of capitalization. Title case capitalizes the first letter of every word except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. Sentence case capitalizes the first letter of the first word.

When writing out an email address or website URL, use all lowercase.

- joeshmo@cere.network
- cere.network

Don't capitalize random words in the middle of sentences. Here are some words that we never capitalize in a sentence. For more, see this [Word List](#) from Mailchimp.

- website
- internet
- online
- email

Contractions

They're great! They give your writing a less formal, friendly tone.

Emoji

Emoji are a fun way to add humor and visual interest to your writing, but use them infrequently and deliberately.

Numbers

Spell out a number when it begins a sentence. Otherwise, use the numeral. This includes ordinals.

- Ten new employees started on Monday, and 12 start next week.
- I ate 3 donuts at Coffee Hour.
- Meg won 1st place in last year's Walktober contest.
- We hosted a group of 8th graders who are learning to code.

Sometimes it feels weird to use the numeral. If it's an expression that typically uses spelled-out numbers, leave them that way.

- A friendly welcome email can help you make a great first impression.
- That is a third-party integration.
- Freeport – the all-in-one solution suite for NFT backed assets.
- After you send your newsletter, you will get a high-five.

Numbers over 3 digits get commas:

- 999
- 1,000
- 150,000

Write out big numbers in full. Abbreviate them if there are space restraints, as in a tweet or a chart: 1k, 150k.

Dates

Generally, spell out the day of the week and the month. Abbreviate only if space is an issue in an app.

- Saturday, January 24
- Sat., Jan. 24

Decimals and fractions

Spell out fractions.

- Yes: two-thirds
- No: 2/3

Use decimal points when a number can't be easily written out as a fraction, like 1.375 or 47.2.

Percentages

Use the % symbol instead of spelling out "percent."

Ranges and spans

Use a hyphen (-) to indicate a range or span of numbers.

- It takes 20-30 days.

Money

When writing about currency, use the currency sign before the amount. Include a decimal and number of cents if more than 0.

- \$20
- \$19.99

When writing about other currencies, follow the same symbol-amount format:

- ¥1
- €1

When writing a monetary amount in the millions, billions, or trillions, abbreviate it like so:

- USD \$1M
- EUR €1B

Telephone numbers

Use dashes without spaces between numbers. Use a country code if your reader is in another country.

- 555-867-5309
- +1-404-123-4567

Temperature

Use the degree symbol and the capital F abbreviation for Fahrenheit.

- 98°F

Time

Use numerals and am or pm, with a space in between. Don't use minutes for on-the-hour time.

- 7 am

- 7:30 pm

Use a hyphen between times to indicate a time period.

- 7 am–10:30 pm

Specify time zones when writing about an event or something else people would need to schedule. Since Cere is in Atlanta, we default to ET.

Abbreviate time zones within the continental United States as follows:

- Eastern time: ET
- Central time: CT
- Mountain time: MT
- Pacific time: PT

When referring to international time zones, spell them out: Nepal Standard Time, Australian Eastern Time. If a time zone does not have a set name, use its [Coordinated Universal Time \(UTC\) offset](#).

Abbreviate decades when referring to those within the past 100 years.

- the 00s
- the 90s

When referring to decades more than 100 years ago, be more specific:

- the 1900s
- the 1890s

Punctuation

Apostrophes

The apostrophe's most common use is making a word possessive. If the word already ends in an s and it's singular, you also add an 's. If the word ends in an s and is plural, just add an apostrophe.

- The donut thief ate Sam's donut.
- The donut thief ate Chris's donut.
- The donut thief ate the managers' donuts.

Apostrophes can also be used to denote that you've dropped some letters from a word, usually for humor or emphasis. This is fine, but do it sparingly.

Colons

Use a colon (rather than an ellipsis, em dash, or comma) to offset a list.

- Erin ordered 3 kinds of donuts: glazed, chocolate, and pumpkin.

You can also use a colon to join 2 related phrases. If a complete sentence follows the colon, capitalize the 1st word.

- I was faced with a dilemma: I wanted a donut, but I'd just eaten a bagel.

Commas

When writing a list, use the serial comma (also known as the Oxford comma).

- Yes: David admires his parents, Oprah, and Justin Timberlake.
- No: David admires his parents, Oprah and Justin Timberlake.
- Yes: My favorite foods are pumpkin, pumpkin pie, and pumpkin cake.
- No: My favorite foods are pumpkin, pumpkin pie and pumpkin cake.

Otherwise, use common sense. If you're unsure, read the sentence out loud. Where you find yourself taking a breath, use a comma.

Dashes and hyphens

Use a hyphen (-) without spaces on either side to link words into a single phrase, or to indicate a span or range.

- first-time user
- Monday-Friday

Use an em dash (—) without spaces on either side to offset an aside.

Use a true em dash, not hyphens (- or --).

- Multivariate testing—just one of our new Pro features—can help you grow your business.
- Austin thought Brad was the donut thief, but he was wrong—it was Lain.

Ellipses

Ellipses (...) can be used to indicate that you're trailing off before the end of a thought. Use them sparingly. Don't use them for emphasis or drama, and don't use them in titles or headers.

- "Where did all those donuts go?" Christy asked. Lain said, "I don't know..."

Ellipses, in brackets, can also be used to show that you're omitting words in a quote.

- "When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, [...] a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

Periods

Periods go inside quotation marks. They go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside parentheses when the parenthetical stands alone.

- Christy said, "I ate a donut."
- I ate a donut (and I ate a bagel, too).
- I ate a donut and a bagel. (The donut was Sam's.)

Leave a single space between sentences.

Question marks

Question marks go inside quotation marks if they're part of the quote. Like periods, they go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside parentheses when the parenthetical stands alone.

Exclamation points

Use exclamation points sparingly, and never more than one at a time. They're like high-fives: A well-timed one is great, but too many can be annoying.

Exclamation points go inside quotation marks. Like periods and question marks, they go outside parentheses when the parenthetical is part of a larger sentence, and inside parentheses when the parenthetical stands alone.

Never use exclamation points in failure messages or alerts. When in doubt, avoid!

Quotation marks

Use quotes to refer to words and letters, titles of short works (like articles and poems), and direct quotations.

Periods and commas go within quotation marks. Question marks within quotes follow logic—if the question mark is part of the quotation, it goes within. If you're asking a question that ends with a quote, it goes outside the quote.

Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

- Who was it that said, "A fool and his donut are easily parted"?
- Brad said, "A wise man once told me, 'A fool and his donut are easily parted.'"

Semicolons

Go easy on semicolons. They usually support long, complicated sentences that could easily be simplified. Try an em dash (—) instead, or simply start a new sentence.

Ampersands

Don't use ampersands unless one is part of a company or brand name.

- Ben and Dan
- Ben & Jerry's

People, places, and things

File extensions

When referring generally to a file extension type, use all uppercase without a period. Add a lowercase s to make plural.

- GIF
- PDF
- HTML
- JPGs

When referring to a specific file, the filename should be lowercase:

- slowclap.gif
- MCBenefits.pdf
- ben-twitter-profile.jpg
- ilovedonuts.html

Pronouns

If your subject's gender is unknown or irrelevant, use "they," "them," and "their" as a singular pronoun. Use "he/him/his" and "she/her/her" pronouns as appropriate. Don't use "one" as a pronoun.

For more on writing about gender, see the Writing about people section.

Quotes

When quoting someone in a blog post or other publication, use the present tense.

- "Using Cere has helped our business grow," says Jamie Smith.

Names and titles

The first time you mention a person in writing, refer to them by their first and last names. On all other mentions, refer to them by their first name.

Capitalize the names of departments and teams (but not the word "team" or "department").

- Marketing team
- Support department

Capitalize individual job titles when referencing a specific role. Don't capitalize when referring to the role in general terms.

- Our new Marketing Manager starts today.
- All the managers ate donuts.

Don't refer to someone as a “ninja,” “rockstar,” or “wizard” unless they literally are one.

Schools

The first time you mention a school, college, or university in a piece of writing, refer to it by its full official name. On all other mentions, use its more common abbreviation.

- Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia Tech
- Georgia State University, GSU

States, cities, and countries

Spell out all city and state names. Don't abbreviate city names.

Per AP Style, all cities should be accompanied by their state, with the exception of: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington.

On first mention, write out United States. On subsequent mentions, US is fine. The same rule applies to any other country or federation with a common abbreviation (European Union, EU; United Kingdom, UK).

URLs and websites

Capitalize the names of websites and web publications. Don't italicize.

Avoid spelling out URLs, but when you need to, leave off the http://www.

Writing About Cere

Use “Cere” in general company communications. Use the company's full legal entity name only where legal, contractual, regulatory, or financial accuracy requires it. Record the approved legal name in the current terminology source rather than leaving a placeholder in this guide.

Always capitalize the “C” in Cere.

Refer to Cere as “we” in first-person company communications. Use “Cere” when a neutral third-person reference is more natural. Do not refer to Cere as “it” in first-person brand copy.

Use every approved product, service, program, network, protocol, and feature name exactly as it appears in the current terminology source. Do not shorten a name, create an abbreviation, change its capitalization, or convert a feature name into a branded term unless that form has been approved.

The terminology source should record the approved full name, permitted short form, capitalization, first-use explanation, and whether the term refers to the company, a legal entity, a product, a feature, a network, or a protocol.

Claims, Comparisons, and Certainty

Statements about Cere's products, technology, performance, adoption, partnerships, customers, funding, security, and market position must be supported by an approved source.

- **Describe current functions accurately.** Use present tense only for functions available in the form being described. Label planned, announced, preview, beta, or test functions clearly.
- **Explain benefits through mechanisms.** Tell the reader what feature, process, or control creates the benefit. Avoid broad claims that do not explain how the result occurs.
- **Keep qualifications beside the claim.** Put a condition, requirement, or limitation in the same sentence or immediately after the statement it changes. Do not place a broad claim in a heading and hide its limits later.
- **Support figures.** Every statistic should have an approved source, a relevant date or reporting period, a clear definition of what was measured, and any qualification needed to interpret it.
- **Make comparisons specific.** Compare named functions, processes, costs, requirements, or outcomes. Do not say Cere is simply better, faster, safer, or more secure without defining the comparison and supporting it.

Current: *[Feature] lets users [verified current function].*

Planned: *Cere plans to add [feature or function].*

In testing: *Cere is testing [feature or function] with [approved description of the test group or environment].*

Qualified claim pattern: *[Feature] supports [function] for [supported environment or user group]. It currently requires [condition].*

Writing About Other Companies

Honor companies' own names for themselves and their products. Go by what's used on their official website.

- iPad
- YouTube
- Yahoo!

Refer to a company or product as “it” (not “they”).

Slang and jargon

Write in plain English. If you need to use a technical term, briefly define it so everyone can understand.

Text formatting

Use italics to indicate the title of a long work (like a book, movie, or album) or to emphasize a word.

- *Dunston Checks In*
- Brandon *really* loves *Dunston Checks In*.

Use italics when citing an example of an in-app Cere element, or referencing button and navigation labels in step-by-step instructions:

- When you're all done, click *Submit*.

Don't use underline formatting, and don't use any combination of italic, bold, caps, and underline.

Left-align text, never center or right-aligned.

Leave one space between sentences, never 2.

Write positively

Prefer language that tells readers what they can do and how to proceed. Positive construction can make instructions easier to follow, but it must never hide restrictions, errors, risks, or bad news.

Less useful: *You can't continue without verifying your account.*

More useful: *Verify your account to continue.*

State a restriction directly when the restriction itself is the information the reader needs. For example: “This feature is not available in [environment or location].” Do not replace a clear limit with vague wording.

When something has failed, say what failed, what is affected, what the team knows, and what the reader should do next.

Vague: *We're experiencing a slight technical issue.*

Direct: *[Service or feature] is currently unavailable. We are investigating and will post the next update by [time and time zone].*

Web Elements

Every piece of content we publish is supported by a number of smaller pieces. This section lays out our style in regards to these web elements, and explains our approach to the tricky art of SEO.

Guidelines

Alt text

Alt text is a way to label images, and it's especially important for people who can't see the images on our website. Alt text should describe the image in a brief sentence or two.

For more on how and why we use alt text, read the [Accessibility](#) section.

Buttons

Button copy should always include verbs. Keep things clear and concise, and use sentence case. It's OK to use an ampersand in button copy.

Standard website buttons include:

- Log in
- Sign up free
- Subscribe
- Email us

Checkboxes

Use sentence case for checkboxes.

Drop-down menus

Use title case for menu names and sentence case for menu items.

Forms

Form titles should clearly and quickly explain the purpose of the form.

Use title case for form titles and sentence case for form fields.

Keep forms as short as possible.

Only request information that we need and intend to use. Don't ask for information that could be considered private or personal, including gender. If you need to ask for gender, provide a field the user can fill in on their own, not a drop-down menu.

Headings and subheadings

Headings and subheadings organize content for readers. They should include the most relevant keywords and cover/highlight the main point(s) of the page.

Heading 1 uses [AP title case](#). Heading 2 and other subheadings are written in sentence case. Avoid using end punctuation except for question marks or when a heading is two or more sentences.

Organize headings and subheadings hierarchically, with headings first, followed by subheadings in order. (An H2 will nestle under H1, an H3 under H2, and on down.)

- Headings (H1) give people a taste of what they're about to read. Use them for page and blog titles.
- Subheadings (H2, H3, etc.) break articles into smaller, more specific sections. They give readers avenues into your content and make it more scannable.

See our [Brand Style Guide](#) for heading formatting.

Links

Provide a link whenever you're referring to something on an external website. Use links to point users to relevant content and trusted external resources.

Don't include preceding articles (a, an, the, our) when you link text. For example:

- Yes: Read the [Vision Paper](#) for details.
- No: Read [the Vision Paper](#) for details.

If a link comes at the end of a sentence or before a comma, don't link the punctuation mark.

Don't say things like "Click here!" or "Click for more information" or "Read this." Write the sentence as you normally would, and link relevant keywords.

Links should look different than regular copy, strong text, or emphasis text. They should have a hover state that communicates they're interactive, and should have a distinct active and visited state. When setting the hover state of links, be sure to include focus state as well, to help readers using assistive technologies and touch devices.

Lists

Use lists to present steps, groups, or sets of information. Give context for the list with a brief introduction. Number lists when the order is important, like when you're describing steps of a process. Don't use numbers when the list's order doesn't matter.

If one of the list items is a complete sentence, use proper punctuation and capitalization on all of the items. If list items are not complete sentences, don't use punctuation, but do capitalize the first word of each item.

Navigation

Use title case for main or global navigation. Use sentence case for sub-navigation.

Navigation links should be clear and concise.

Radio buttons

Use title case for headings and sentence case for button fields.

Related articles

Sometimes a long piece of copy lends itself to a list of related links at the end. Don't go overboard—4 is usually plenty.

Related articles should appear in a logical order, following the step down/step up rule: The first article should be a step down in complexity from the current article. The second one should be a step up in complexity to a more advanced article.

If you can, avoid repeating links from the body text in related articles.

Titles

Titles organize pages and guide readers. A title appears at the beginning of a page or section and briefly describes the content that follows. Titles also tell search engines what a page is about, and show up in search results.

Titles are written (you guessed it) in [title case](#). Don't use end punctuation in a title unless the title is a question.

SEO

We write for humans, not machines. We don't use gross SEO techniques like keyword stuffing to bump search results. But we also want to make it easy for people and search engines to find and share our content. Here are some not-icky ways to do this:

- Organize your page around one topic. Use clear, descriptive terms in titles and headings that relate to the topic at hand.
- Use descriptive headings to structure your page and highlight important information.
- Give every image descriptive alt text.

How to Write Educational Content

At Cere, educational content appears within our [Docs website](#), certain marketing materials, and internal training documents. This section lays out the guiding

principles for writing educational content and discusses the main types of educational content that exist at Cere.

Basics

Someone taking in educational content is usually looking to answer a specific question. That question might be broad or narrowly focused, but either way our goal is to provide answers without distraction.

For each project, consider your audience's background, goal, and current mood. Ask these questions:

- Who is your audience? Are they Cere employees, a Cere user, a developer?
- What is this person's goal? To complete a task? To research a topic?
- What is this person's mindset? Are they in the middle of a task, or in a hurry? Could they be frustrated or feeling overwhelmed?

We don't want to overload our audience with unnecessary information, choices, or complex ideas or phrases. This is particularly important since we always consider the neurodiversity of our audience, and that learning something new can often feel overwhelming.

When writing educational content, remember to stick to the topic at hand. Keep sentences, paragraphs, and procedural steps focused and concise.

Audience and Explanation Depth

Choose the level of explanation according to the intended reader, not the writer's familiarity with the subject. Identify what readers are expected to know and which concepts the content must explain.

- **For a general or mixed audience:** begin with a plain-language explanation, explain why the subject matters before adding detail, define unfamiliar terms and abbreviations, and link to deeper technical material where appropriate.
- **For a technical audience:** use established terminology consistently, state requirements and dependencies, provide exact steps or references, and do not add introductory explanation the audience does not need.

When one piece serves both groups, layer the information: start with a plain summary, explain the function or consequence, provide the technical detail, and then link to documentation or source material.

Types of educational content

We create educational content to serve various channels and audiences. We need to not only educate our customers, but also inform our partners and staff around when and how to use our products and features.

Educational content at Cere can include:

- Articles, guides, tutorials and troubleshooting advice
- Tutorial videos published to our website and YouTube
- Webinars and workshops presented live and published to our website and YouTube
- Instagram reels and other how-to social content
- API documentation and developer resources
- Release notes
- Staff training materials, courses, and resources
- Partner training materials, courses, and resources

Guidelines

Writing educational content

When writing educational content, be sure to follow the style points outlined in the Voice and Tone and Grammar and Mechanics sections. In addition, here are some education-specific goals and pointers to keep in mind.

Stay relevant to the topic

When a reader or viewer clicks on a link to educational content, they expect to find the answer they want. Don't stray too far from the title or topic at hand. Use links to make related content available. If you find you're getting too far from the intended topic, then you may need to create a related video, article, or deck.

Keep headlines and paragraphs short and scannable

Readers often scan a page for info that will answer their particular question. When writing educational content, be sure your headlines are short, descriptive, and parallel to help with scanning.

When writing video scripts, describe the outcome before doing the action so viewers feel confident they're watching content that will answer their question.

Strive for simplicity and clarity

Be as clear as possible. Use simple words and phrases while avoiding gerunds and hard-to-translate words or idioms. Focus on the specific task and limit the number of sentences per paragraph. Aim to keep your sentences at 25 words or less.

Video scripts should include clear transitional language and cues that introduce a specific visual element or emphasize where the user should focus their attention. E.g. "To do this," or "As you see here, there are some suggestions..."

Provide context through embedded screenshots, videos, and GIFs

Screenshots, videos, and GIFs make content more scannable and accessible, especially in written guides, tutorials, and training materials. Keep each visual focused on the action or meaning it conveys. Always crop screenshots tightly around the action.

Formatting educational content

Educational content often uses formatting to help convey meaning. Although various forms of educational content are organized differently, the formatting tips are consistent.

Capitalization

Capitalize proper names of Cere products, features, pages, tools, and teams when directly mentioned.

- Creative Assistant
- Pre-Built Customer Journeys
- Compliance team, Billing team

Bolding

In step-by-step instructions, capitalize and bold navigation and button labels as they appear in the app.

- Navigate to the **Reports** page.
- Click **Create**.

Writing Legal Content

Cere may publish legal content to protect ourselves and our users around the world. Most of our legal content is written by the Legal department with help from the Communications team. This section gives a general overview of the types of legal content we publish and how those documents are written.

For information about laws that apply to non-legal content, see the Copyright and trademark section.

Basics

The way we write, review, and publish legal content is different than how we do many other kinds of writing at Cere. The most important difference is that all legal content either starts with or passes through the Legal team.

But that doesn't mean legal content has to be difficult to read. We try to present our legal information in the most pleasant way possible. Our goals for Cere's legal content are:

- **Accuracy.** Our first and foremost concern is that we present the correct information in a truthful way.
- **Clarity.** We try to avoid legal jargon and overly formal wording. Our users need to understand the agreement they're making with us.
- **Succinctness.** We want our users to read and understand our legal documents, while also respecting their time.

Types of legal content

We publish several types of legal documents, each with their own writing processes and goals.

Public legal documents

We keep these in one place on our legal page:

- Terms of use
- Acceptable use policy
- Privacy policy
- API use policy
- Copyright policy

These policies apply to all of Cere's users. The Legal and Communication teams work together to make them as transparent and easy to read as possible. When someone signs up to use Cere, they must agree to all of those terms.

All of our public legal documents, and any changes to those documents, are drafted by our in-house Legal team. When new legal documents are published or edited, we notify all our users of the updates and provide a window for them to object before the new terms go into effect.

Guides and articles about legal topics

We may also publish guides and technical articles about legal concepts that may affect our users.

The Legal team will perform periodic reviews of all marketing and technical content to make sure all related links and information is up to date.

Customer service messages

We respond to legal questions from users every day. We answer common CAN-SPAM inquiries, like "Why does my mailing address have to appear on campaigns?" We also see questions about our practices and policies, like "How long is data retained?" and "Where are your servers located?" and "Why is my industry or content prohibited?"

Our Support team handles the majority of user communications. If a user raises a legal issue, a support agent will send the proposed reply to the Legal team for review. Users may also contact the Legal team directly.

Common issues can be reviewed and sent by a paralegal or other legal staff member. More complex issues, or issues threatening litigation or criminal wrongdoing, will be drafted by a paralegal and then escalated to a lawyer for review.

Public communications

Occasionally we may have to publish communications about security, privacy, and other corporate issues. This could come in the form of an email to users, a blog post, a public statement, or a press release.

The Communications team works with the Legal team to write and publish these documents, and the executive team reviews them.

Guidelines

When writing legal content, generally follow the style points outlined in the Voice and tone and Grammar and mechanics sections. Here are some more general considerations, too.

Start with the facts

We have some standard language that we use for common issues or requests, but since legal content is so fact-specific, we start there before getting into structure and format. That's why you won't see many templates for our legal content.

Use plain language

Legal content is serious business, so the tone is more formal than most of our content. That said, we want all of our users to be able to understand our legal content. So whenever possible, we use plain language rather than legal jargon.

Instead of: "If an individual purports, and has the legal authority, to sign these Terms of Use electronically on behalf of an employer or client then that individual represents and warrants that they have full authority to bind the entity herein to the terms of this hereof agreement"

We say: "If you sign up on behalf of a company or other entity, you represent and warrant that you have the authority to accept these Terms on their behalf."

There are some legal terms we have to include because either there's not a sufficient plain language alternative, or case law or statute dictates that term has to be used for the contract to hold up in court. For example, sometimes we need to say "represent and warrant" instead of "confirm" or "agree." If we use those terms, we can provide an example or quick definition to help people understand what they're reading. We can't avoid all legal terminology, but we can pare it down to what's necessary.

Some companies have complicated terms and write plain-language summaries so people can understand the agreement. We don't summarize our legal content, but instead try to write the terms themselves in plain language. We use a sidebar to provide examples or links to further reading for people who want more context.

Definitions

Using plain language for the terms you define up front can make legal documents easier to read. You've probably read contracts that say something like "The

Corporation” or “The User” throughout, instead of “we” (meaning the company) and “you” (meaning the user who is agreeing to the terms). There’s a quick fix for that. At the beginning of the document, say something like:

- Cere is owned and operated by Cere Network Inc., a limited liability corporation (“Cere,” “we,” or “us”). As a user of the Service or a representative of an entity that’s a user of the Service, you’re a “Member” according to this agreement (or “you”).

After that, you’re free to use “we,” “us,” “you,” and “your” throughout the rest of the agreement. That simple change makes the document much friendlier to read.

Contractions

We use contractions in many of our legal documents, which makes them sound more human and flow better with the rest of our content. Contracting words doesn't affect the validity of an agreement.

Never offer legal advice

While we want to inform our users about legal issues related to their use of Cere, we can’t offer them legal advice. Sometimes it’s a fine line. The legal department will check for this in their content review.

Writing Email Newsletters

We send a lot of email ourselves, and we follow our own best practices to set an example for users. But as devices shrink and the inbox evolves, our oldest tip is still the most important: Only send when you have something to say.

Basics

Our email newsletters help empower and inform Cere users. Here are the most common types of content we send by email:

- Product and feature announcements
- Tips for getting the most out of existing products and features
- Regular monthly newsletters
- Automated series (Getting Started with Cere)
- Event invitations and information about online courses
- System alerts about changes to functionality or scheduled maintenance
- Internal newsletters

Guidelines

Email newsletters generally follow the style points outlined in the **Voice and tone** and **Grammar and mechanics** sections. Here are some additional considerations.

Consider all elements

Every email newsletter is made up of the following elements. Make sure they're all in place before clicking send:

From name

This is usually the company or team's name. It identifies the sender in the recipient's inbox.

Subject line

Keep your subject line descriptive. There's no perfect length, but some email clients display only the first words. Tell—don't sell—what's inside. Subject lines should be in sentence case. (Note that this is different from a headline, which you may want to include in the campaign itself.)

Preheader text

The top line of your campaign appears beside each subject line in the inbox. Provide the info readers need when they're deciding if they should open.

Body copy

Keep your content concise. Write with a clear purpose and connect each paragraph to your main idea. Add images when they're helpful.

Call to action

Make the next step clear. Whether you're asking people to buy something, read something, share something, or respond to something, offer a clear direction to close your message so readers know what to do next.

Footer

All campaigns follow [CAN-SPAM rules](#). Include an unsubscribe link, mailing address, and permission reminder in the footer of each newsletter.

Consider your perspective

When sending an email newsletter from Cere, use the 3rd person "we." When sending a newsletter as an individual, use the 1st person.

Use a hierarchy

Most readers will be scanning your emails or viewing them on a small screen. Put the most important information first.

Include a call to action

Make the reader's next step obvious and close each campaign with a call to action. Link to a blog post, event registration, purchase page, or signup page. You can add a button or include a text link in the closing paragraph.

Avoid unnecessary links

More than 50% of emails are read on a mobile device. Limit links to the most important resources to focus your call to action and prevent errant taps on smaller screens.

Use alt text

Some email clients disable images by default. Include an alt tag to describe the information in the image for people who aren't able to see it.

Segment your audience

It's exciting to send to millions of users at once, but it's doubtful that every subscriber is interested in every topic. Segment your list to find a particular audience that's likely to react.

Once you've selected an audience, adjust the language to fit their needs. For example, programmers and CTOs are more likely to understand and appreciate direct, technical terms.

Test your campaigns

Use the preview mode to begin, and run an Inbox Inspection to see your newsletter in different email clients. Read your campaign out loud to yourself, then send a test to a coworker for a second look.

Writing for Social Media

We use social media to build relationships with Cere users and share all the cool stuff we do. But it also creates opportunities to say the wrong thing, put off customers, and damage our brand. So we're careful and deliberate in what we post to our social channels. This section lays out how we strike that delicate balance.

Basics

Cere has or will have a presence on most major social media platforms. Here are our most active accounts and what we usually post on each:

- [Twitter](#): Product news, brand marketing, events, media mentions, evergreen content, "we're hiring!" posts
- [Facebook](#): Product news, brand marketing, events, media mentions, evergreen content, "we're hiring!" posts
- [LinkedIn](#): Product news, recruiting content, media mentions, evergreen content
- [Telegram](#): Product news, recruiting content, media mentions, evergreen content, community announcements

These channels are all managed by the Marketing team. The guidelines in this section apply to all of Cere's channels.

Guidelines

Our writing for social media should generally follow the style points outlined in the Voice and tone and Grammar and mechanics sections. Here are some additional pointers, too.

Write short, but smart

Some social media platforms have a character limit; others don't. But for the most part, we keep our social media copy short.

- Twitter: 280 characters.
- Facebook: No limit, but aim for 1-2 short sentences.
- Telegram: No real limit, but try to keep it reasonable (don't write a book—link to longer content if needed, such as detailed community announcements, etc.).

To write short, simplify your ideas or reduce the amount of information you're sharing—but not by altering the spelling or punctuation of the words themselves. It's fine to use the shorter version of some words, like "info" for "information." But do not use numbers and letters in place of words, like "4" instead of "for" or "u" instead of "you."

Engagement

Do your best to adhere to Cere style guidelines when you're using our social media channels to correspond with users. Use correct grammar and punctuation—and avoid excessive exclamation points.

When appropriate, you can tag the subject of your post on Twitter or Facebook. But avoid directly tweeting at or otherwise publicly tagging a post subject with messages like, "Hey, we wrote about you!" Never ask for retweets, likes, or favorites.

- Yes: "We talked with @joeshmo about his awesomeness."
<http://blog.cere.network/joeshmo-is-awesome>"
- No: "Hey @joeshmo, can you RT this post we wrote about you?"
<http://blog.cere.network/joeshmo-is-awesome>"

Hashtags

We employ hashtags rarely and deliberately. We may use them to promote an event or connect with users at a conference. Do not use current event or trending hashtags to promote Cere.

Trending topics

Do not use social media to comment on trending topics or current events that are unrelated to Cere.

Be aware of what's going on in the news when you're publishing social content for Cere. During major breaking news events, we turn off all promoted and scheduled social posts.

Writing for Accessibility

We're always working to make our content more accessible and usable to the widest possible audience. Writing for accessibility goes way beyond making everything on the page available as text. It also affects the way you organize content and guide readers through a page. Depending on the audience and country, there may be laws governing the level of accessibility required. At minimum, an accessible version should be available. Accessibility includes users of all mental and physical capacities, whether situational (broken glasses!) or more permanent.

Basics

We write for a diverse audience of readers who all interact with our content in different ways. We aim to make our content accessible to anyone using a screen reader, keyboard navigation, or Braille interface, and to users of all cognitive capabilities.

As you write, consider the following:

- Would this language make sense to someone who doesn't work here?
- Could someone quickly scan this document and understand the material?
- If someone can't see the colors, images or video, is the message still clear?
- Is the markup clean and structured?
- Mobile devices with accessibility features are increasingly becoming core communication tools. Does this work well on them?

Many of the best practices for writing for accessibility echo those for writing educational content, with the added complexity of markup, syntax, and structure.

Guidelines

Avoid directional language

Avoid directional instructions and any language that requires the reader to see the layout or design of the page. This is helpful for many reasons, including layout changes on mobile.

- Yes: "Select from these options," (with the steps listed after the title)
- No: "Select from the options in the right sidebar."

Use headers

Headers should always be nested and consecutive. Never skip a header level for styling reasons. To help group sections, be sure the page title is H1, top-level

sections are H2s, and subsequent inside those are H3 and beyond. Avoid excessive nesting.

Employ a hierarchy

Put the most important information first. Place similar topics in the same paragraph, and clearly separate different topics with headings.

Starting with a simple outline that includes key messages can help you create a hierarchy and organize your ideas in a logical way. This improves scannability and encourages better understanding.

Make true lists instead of using a paragraph or line breaks.

Label forms

Label inputs with clear names and use appropriate tags. Think carefully about what fields are necessary—and especially which ones you mark as required. Label required fields clearly. The shorter the form, the better.

Use descriptive links

Links should provide information on the associated action or destination. Try to avoid “click here” or “learn more.”

Use plain language

Write short sentences and use familiar words. Avoid jargon and slang. If you need to use an abbreviation or acronym that people may not understand, explain what it means on first reference.

Use alt text

The alt tag is the most basic form of image description, and it should be included on all images. The language will depend on the purpose of the image:

- If it’s a creative photo or supports a story, describe the image in detail in a brief caption.
- If the image is serving a specific function, describe what’s inside the image in detail. People who don’t see the image should come away with the same information as if they had.
- If you’re sharing a chart or graph, include the data in the alt text so people have all the important information.

Each browser handles alt tags differently. Supplement images with standard captions when possible.

Make sure closed captioning is available

Closed captioning or transcripts should be available for all videos. The information presented in videos should also be available in other formats.

Be mindful of visual elements

Aim for high contrast between your font and background colors. Use colors from the [Cere Brand Style Guide](#). Our website is a good example of a design for background and fonts that can be used.

Images should not be the only method of communication, because images may not load or may not be seen. Avoid using images when the same information could be communicated in writing.

Resources

- [Accessibility cheatsheet](#)
- [18F Accessibility Guide](#)
- [Designing for Screen Reader Compatibility](#)
- [Accessible color combinations](#)
- [WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool](#)

Writing for Translation

Cere aims to serve millions of users in hundreds of countries and territories, not just the United States. As our user base grows, it becomes more and more important that our content is accessible to people around the world.

We call the process of writing copy for translation “internationalization.” This section will address things you can do to help international audiences, including translators, better comprehend your text.

Basics

Our Technical Content will eventually be available to all users in English, Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese. Sometimes other pieces of content will be translated as well.

We try to write all of our content in standard, straightforward English that can be understood by users with limited English proficiency. It's much easier for a translator to clearly communicate ideas written in straightforward, uncomplicated sentences.

Here are some guiding principles for writing for international audiences:

- **Use active voice.** We always aim for this, but it's especially important when writing for translation.
- **Use the subject-verb-object sentence structure.** It's not used by all languages, but it's widely recognized.

- **Use positive words when talking about positive situations.** For example, because a question like “Don’t you think she did a great job?” begins with a negative word, a non-native English speaker may interpret its implication as negative. A better version would be “She did a good job, right?”

Guidelines

When writing for international audiences, we generally follow what's outlined in the **Voice and tone** and **Grammar and mechanics** sections. But in this section more than others, some style points contradict what's stated elsewhere in the guide. If you’re writing something to be translated, the guidelines in this section should take precedence.

Consider cultural differences

Cere’s voice is conversational and semi-formal. However, in some cultures, text that is too informal can be considered offensive. Check with your translator to see if this is the case for the particular language you’re writing for.

The translation company should give the option to translate in a formal or informal tone, if the language allows for it. (For example, in Spanish, it is possible to write informally where *tú* = you or formally where *usted* = you.)

When writing text that will be translated, be careful about making references to things of local or regional importance. These may not be recognizable to readers outside the US.

Prioritize clarity

Keep your copy brief, but don’t sacrifice clarity for brevity. You may need to repeat or add words to make the meaning of your sentences clear to a translator.

Avoid ambiguity and confusion

Many words, parts of speech, and grammar mechanics we don’t think twice about have the potential to cause confusion for translators and non-native English speakers. Here are some of the big trouble spots to avoid.

Avoid unclear pronoun references

- Yes: Many believe that buying a list of email addresses and sending to the list is OK. Such action can actually cause high rates of abuse, bounces, and unsubscribes. Purchasing a list and sending to it may cause your account to be suspended.
- No: Many believe that buying a list of email addresses and sending to it is okay. This can actually cause high rates of abuse, bounces, and unsubscribes. It can ultimately cause your account to be suspended.

Avoid -ing words

In English, many different types of words end in -ing: nouns, adjectives, progressive verbs, etc. But a translator who is a non-native English speaker may not be able to recognize the distinctions and may try to translate them all in the same way.

Because of this, we want to avoid -ing words when possible. One exception to this rule is words like “graphing calculator” and “riding lawnmower,” where the -ing word is part of a noun’s name and can’t be worked around.

Here are some other cases where you might see -ing words, and suggestions for how to edit around them.

Gerunds

- Yes: In this article we will talk about distributed data storage.
- No: In this article we will talk about decentralizing data storage.

Adjectives

- Yes: At the top of the page, there is a creature with a smile on his face.
- No: At the top of the page, there is a smiling creature.

Parts of verbs

- Yes: Several developers are currently working on that feature.
- No: Several developers are working on that feature. (When you can’t easily avoid the -ing word, it may help to add an adverb to clarify the meaning.)

Parts of phrases modifying nouns

- Yes: From our backyard, we could hear the planes that took off from the airport.
- No: From our backyard, we could hear the planes taking off from the airport.

Other words and mechanics to avoid

- Slang, idioms, and cliches
- Shortened words, even if they’re common in English (use “application,” not “app”)
- Uncommon foreign words (use “genuine,” not “bona fide”)
- Unnecessary abbreviations (use “for example,” not “e.g.”)
- Converting one part of speech into another if it isn’t already commonly used (use “Send us an email” instead of “message us”)
- Non-standard or indirect verb usage (use “he says,” not “he’s like” or “he was all”)
- Double negatives
- Synonyms, generally. Don’t use a lot of different words for the same thing in a single piece of writing. Instead of mixing it up with “campaign,” “newsletter,” “bulletin,” etc., pick one term and stick with it.

Beware words with multiple meanings

“Once” (could mean “one time,” “after,” “in the past,” or “when”) - Yes: After you log in, you will see your account’s Dashboard. - No: Once you log in, you will see your account’s Dashboard.

“Right” (could mean “correct,” “the opposite of left,” “politically conservative,” etc.)

- Yes: In the File Manager, click the correct image and drag it to the pane at right.
- No: In the File Manager, click the right image and drag it to the right pane.

“Since” (could refer to a point in time, or a synonym of “because”)

- Yes: Because you already have a complete mailing list, you can send your campaign at any time.
- No: Since you already have complete mailing list, you can send your campaign at any time.

“Require” plus an infinitive (could confuse the relationship between subject and object)

- Yes: Autoresponders can be configured and sent from paid accounts.
- No: A paid account is required to send autoresponders. (This could imply that users with paid accounts are required to send autoresponders.)

“Has” or “have” plus past participle (could confuse the relationship between subject and object)

- Yes: The folder contains sent campaigns.
- No: The folder has sent campaigns.

Numbers

Measurements

When writing for an international audience, use the metric system. Spell out all units and avoid abbreviations.

Currency

Many countries call their currency “the dollar,” but the value is going to differ between countries. The US dollar is not the same as the Canadian dollar, for example. So it’s important to specify.

Indicate currency by using its 3-letter abbreviation along with the currency symbol, such as USD or CAD. We would say \$25 USD, not \$25.

Avoid colloquial phrases that relate to money, like “five-and-dime,” “greenbacks,” or “c-notes.” These won’t translate well.

Creating Structured Content

At Cere, we write 2 kinds of content: structured and unstructured. Most of our technical and educational documents are structured, following standardized content templates. These templates make both writing and reading easier. They also help future-proof our documents, making it easier for developers to come in later and add semantic data to make the work reusable outside of where it was originally published.

This section lays out when to use a structured content template and how to create a template of your own.

Basics

While some content types are better served by a unique structure created by the writer, others lend themselves to a reusable structure. Blog posts, newsletter content, and most marketing copy are all examples of unstructured content that will vary from piece to piece. The more reusable your content might be, the more helpful a content template will be.

Consider using a template if:

- Users would benefit from seeing your content multiple places
- Readers need to be able to scan it
- Writers need to be able to create it quickly
- You want to encourage repeat visits and familiarity with your content

All educational content at Cere relies heavily on content templates. We use templates for Technical Content, Integration Directory descriptions, marketing guides, and more.

Guidelines

If you're looking for a template for your structured content but can't find one that meets your needs, you may want to create your own. There are two main ways to approach this.

Use a model

If you already have a piece of content that serves its purpose well, use it as a model. Review some of the templates in the style guide to see how granular you might want to get, and look for any elements you might want to add.

As you read through the model document, make a list of all the individual parts that make up the piece. Then briefly describe what they do and how they do it.

Common elements in templates are:

- Title
- Introduction

- Body content (which can usually be broken apart into smaller elements)
- Additional links

Keep in mind that the template has to be reusable, so it's best to focus on the high-level goal of the content type, rather than the message of a particular piece.

Start from scratch

If you like outlining before you write, that's a great way to start your template. This will give you an early look at the elements you'll include in your final template and will help organize your writing process.

You may prefer to write a draft first, then outline later based on how the parts fit together. Read your draft closely and identify the important elements or patterns you've used. Looking for things like introductions, sections with headings, tables, images, and other elements that aren't topic-specific. Write them out and describe how they inform the meaning or usability of the piece.

Create your template by listing out the elements you identify in your outline or draft. Consider each element and what it contributes to the meaning of the piece. Is its purpose important enough that every content of this type should include it? If so, make it part of your template.

Copyright and Trademarks

Copyright is a bundle of exclusive legal rights that vary depending on the type of work. A copyright owner can grant some or all of those rights to others through a license. This section will lay out our approach to copyrights, trademarks, and Creative Commons licenses.

Basics

Copyright protection applies to any original works that are fixed in a tangible medium. This includes works like drawings, recordings of a song, short stories, or paintings, but not something like a garden, since it will grow and change by nature. Copyright does not cover facts, ideas, names, or characters.

Copyright protection begins when the work is first created and it doesn't require any formal filings. However, to enforce a copyright in the US, you need to register the work with the US Copyright Office. (For further clarity, check out their [FAQ](#) page, which is full of gems like ["How do I protect my sighting of Elvis?"](#))

Copyright notice on the work is not required but it *is* recommended, since it cuts off a defense of [innocent infringement](#).

Copyright at Cere

Copyright law applies to nearly every piece of content we create at Cere, from our website to our blog posts to the gifts we make for our users. We display proper—and prominent—copyright notice on our website site and any other content we produce.

At minimum, these copyright notices read, “© [YEAR] Cere.”

At the bottom of every page of our website, we also include a longer notice to make it clear that all rights are reserved and our marks are registered: “© 2001-2022 All Rights Reserved. Cere® is a registered trademark of Cere Network Inc.

Other creators’ copyrights

We respect the copyright of other creators. If we want to use someone else’s copyrighted work, we must obtain a license from the owners.

A copyright license spells out these terms:

- Where we can use the work
- How long we can use it for
- How much we’ll pay them for the use
- Whether or not we’re the only ones who can use the work
- What we can do with the work
- Any restrictions on our use (for example, that we can use it online but not on a billboard)

A common license will read something like this:

“You grant Cere Network a perpetual, worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty free license to display, distribute, and publish the Work in our marketing in any medium now known or later developed.”

If you need to get a copyright license for work at Cere or if someone outside of Cere asks to use our copyrighted work, please contact the legal team.

Social media and copyright

This is an area where the letter of the law and common practice sometimes differ.

Social media posts often include copyrighted elements like pictures, GIFs, or pieces of writing. If you’re using a copyrighted element in a commercial manner on social media, you should request permission from the copyright holder. Since Cere is a company, we defer to the position that our use will be perceived as commercial. But if you’re using it in a more informative or commentary way, like sharing a meme to indicate how you feel about a news story, you may not need to request permission.

Regardless, you should always link to the source of the copyrighted element you’re using, and never make it look like you created work that belongs to someone else.

Image use and copyright

Cere almost always uses original images in our blog posts. If you use an image, photo, or other design element made by someone outside Cere, get permission first. Once you have permission, always give the copyright owner credit and link back to the original source.

Images retrieved via Google image search are not licensed for fair use, but many images are available under license through stock photo websites, or open for use under a Creative Commons license. Flickr has a great search feature for images available under Creative Commons licenses.

Other licenses

Creative Commons licenses

Instead of the standard “all rights reserved,” some creators choose to make their work available for public use with different levels of attribution required. That’s what we’ve done with this style guide. Find a breakdown of licenses on the [Creative Commons website](#).

Please check with Cere’s legal team before making something you created here available under a Creative Commons license. We love to share our work, but we use these licenses sparingly, because we have to protect our intellectual property and trade secrets.

Trademarks

A trademark, often called a mark, can be a word, name, sign, design, or a combination of those. It’s used to identify the provider of a particular product or service. They’re usually words and images, but in some cases, they can even be a [color](#).

To be protectable, a trademark needs a distinctive element. There’s a “spectrum of distinctiveness” that spans from inherently protectable marks to ones that require additional proof to ones that may never be protected.

- **Fanciful marks**, which are made up words like Kodak or Xerox, are the most easily registered and protected.
- **Arbitrary marks**, which are words which are used out of context like Apple or Sprite, are also easy to protect.
- **Suggestive marks**, which suggest at some element of the goods or services like Greyhound, follow.
- **Descriptive marks**, where the word's dictionary meaning aligns with the goods or services offered, like Mr. Plumber or Lektronic, are not protectable unless they develop a secondary meaning. That means a consumer would immediately associate the mark with only that good or service. This can be hard to prove, so it's best to avoid descriptive marks when possible.
- **Generic terms**, or the common name for a product or service, are not protectable.

A trademark is only valid for as long as it indicates the source of that good or service, so we have to be very careful about how our marks are used. We may have to send out cease and desist letters sometimes, because even the friendliest companies have to protect their trademarks. If a trademark is properly protected, it can last forever and may be a company's most valuable asset.

Displaying trademark notices

To note that something is a trademark, and in the case of registered marks in order to collect damages, the trademark has to be displayed with an appropriate symbol.

Here are the various trademark symbols and when to use them:

- For unregistered trademarks of goods, use TM
- For unregistered trademarks of services, use SM
- For trademarks granted registration by the United States Patent and Trademark Office, use ®
 - Note that using ® on marks that haven't been registered by the USPTO can be considered fraud, so if you're not sure if a trademark is registered, don't use ®.

The trademark symbol should appear as close to the mark as possible.

Registering trademarks at Cere

We register all of our trademarks. Before we decide to use a name for a product, we perform a trademark search to make sure there aren't any confusingly similar trademarks already in use.

For the most part, our trademarks are "suggestive marks," which mean the name suggests at some element of the goods or services represented.

If you're working on a new product at Cere, submit name possibilities to the legal team so they can get a head start on the trademark search. Even if you haven't used the name yet, we can go ahead and file an Intent to Use application.

Word List

Standardized spellings

These words can be slippery. Here's how we write them. (If it's not on this list, defer to the [AP Style Guide](#).)

- add-on (noun, adjective), add on (verb)
- back end (noun), back-end (adjective)
- best seller (noun), best-selling (adjective)
- beta
- brick-and-mortar
- checkbox
- coworker
- click-through rate (CTR)

- cost per click
- double-click
- drop-down (noun, adjective), drop down (verb)
- e-commerce (the industry)
- ePub
- email (never hyphenate, never capitalize unless it begins a sentence)
 - To name
 - From name
 - Reply-to name
 - Subject line
 - Cc, Bcc
- emoji (singular and plural)
- front end (noun), front-end (adjective)
- geolocation
- hashtag
- homepage
- integrate
- internet (never capitalize unless it begins a sentence)
- login (noun, adjective), log in (verb)
- Like (the social media activity)
- multichannel
- nonprofit
- OK
- omnichannel (use sparingly)
- online (never capitalize unless it begins a sentence)
- opt-in (noun, adjective), opt in (verb)
- pay-per-click (PPC)
- pop-up (noun, adjective), pop up (verb)
- pre-sale
- product-market fit
- signup (noun, adjective), sign up (verb)
- sync
- third party (noun), third-party (adjective)
- tweet, retweet
- username
- URL
- website
- Wi-Fi

Words to avoid

- automagical
- Corporate filler such as incentivize, leverage, thought leader, learnings, or other terms that add no precise meaning.

- internets, interwebs, or other playful variations of “internet,” unless directly quoting someone and the wording matters.
- ninja, rockstar, wizard, or unicorn for job titles or professional ability, unless the word is literal or part of an approved proper name.
- young, old, elderly, or other age descriptions unless age is relevant and the wording follows the Writing About People section.
- crushing it, killing it, rise and grind, and similar slogans.
- crazy, insane, or similar language to describe people, behavior, systems, results, or errors.
- best-in-breed and other broad superlatives without a defined and supported comparison.
- activation when referring merely to Cere’s presence at an event. Name the booth, session, demonstration, campaign, or other activity instead.
- blacklist, whitelist, grandfathered, slave, or master when a clear neutral alternative exists. Use allowlist, blocklist, legacy, primary, secondary, source, or replica according to the technical meaning.
- deaf, blind, lame, or other disability terms as metaphors or negative descriptions. These words may be appropriate when accurately describing a person or accessibility subject, following the Writing About People guidance.
- Vague technology claims such as next-generation, cutting-edge, seamless, frictionless, limitless, complete control, the future of, industry-leading, or superior unless the sentence defines and supports the claim.
- secure, safer, private, decentralized, or trustless when the sentence does not identify the specific property, component, process, threat model, or limitation being described.

Do not ban a technically necessary word merely because it is sometimes misused. The test is whether the sentence gives the intended reader precise, supported information.

Summary

Use this section as a quick check. The detailed sections govern when a subject needs more explanation.

Principles

- Identify the audience, purpose, and required action before writing.
- Lead with the main point, verified function, result, or next step.
- Use precise terms and define them when the intended reader may not know them.
- Explain benefits through the feature, process, or mechanism that creates them.
- Distinguish current functions from plans, expectations, previews, and tests.
- Support claims, figures, and comparisons, and place conditions beside the statement they qualify.
- Respect the reader's knowledge and time. Remove anything that does not help them understand, decide, or act.

Voice and Tone

Cere's voice is clear, technically credible, genuine, helpful, direct, and human. We make difficult subjects easier to understand without losing their technical meaning.

Tone changes according to the audience and situation. Product content is confident and explanatory; documentation exact and task-focused; support calm and direct; incident communication factual and accountable; investor communication formal and evidence-led; and social content conversational and concise.

Clarity and factual accuracy come before entertainment or personality. Use humor only where it suits the channel and does not minimize the reader's problem.

Writing About Cere

- Use Cere's company, legal, product, service, feature, network, and protocol names exactly as approved.
- Refer to Cere as "we" in first-person company communication and as "Cere" in neutral third-person references.
- Do not modify the Cere name, create unofficial abbreviations, or build routine messaging around brain imagery.

- Use present tense only for current functions and qualify plans, tests, previews, and forecasts.
- Compare specific functions or outcomes rather than claiming broad superiority.

Writing About People

Write with a person-first perspective and consider the effect of your language. Do not reference age, disability, medical conditions, race, gender, sexuality, heritage, or nationality unless it is relevant.

Use a person's communicated pronouns. When you do not know them, use the person's name or singular "they." Avoid gendered job titles and disability terms used as metaphors.

Related resource: [The Conscious Style Guide](#).

Grammar and Mechanics

- Group related ideas and use descriptive headings so readers can scan.
- Prefer active voice, but use passive voice when the actor is unknown, unimportant, or appropriately omitted.
- Use short, direct sentences where possible, but do not sacrifice accuracy or necessary context for brevity.
- Use one approved term consistently for each product, feature, action, or concept.
- Use contractions when they suit the channel. Reduce or avoid them in legal and highly formal writing.
- Use the serial comma, avoid underline, and do not combine several forms of emphasis.
- Read the writing aloud and verify all names, facts, figures, links, commands, and interface labels.

Web Elements

- Organize each page around a clear topic and information hierarchy.
- Use descriptive titles, headings, links, button labels, form labels, and alt text.

- Buttons should name an action. Lists should have a clear introduction and use numbers when order matters.
- Do not use “click here,” “read this,” or other link text that hides the destination.
- Use exact labels and ordered steps in instructions.

Writing for Accessibility

- Put the most useful information first and separate subjects with headings.
- Use plain language, descriptive links, meaningful alt text, captions, and properly labelled form controls.
- Avoid instructions that depend on seeing a position, color, shape, or layout.
- Use images when they add meaning, and provide the same essential information in an accessible form.

Writing for Translation

- Use clear sentence structures, explicit references, and consistent terminology.
- Avoid double negatives, idioms, slang, unnecessary abbreviations, ambiguous pronouns, and words with several possible meanings.
- Write briefly where possible, but repeat or add words when a translator needs them to preserve the meaning.