UX CONTENT
C O L L E C T I V E

JobPay Style Guide

UX writer: Brent Minderler

Principles

These content principles will help make the user experience helpful and simple for our customers.

When writing for users, you should:

1. **Write like you're speaking to a friend**
   Writing for JobPay is like speaking to friends because having a conversation is natural. We know and apply basic grammar rules (even the obscure ones), but we're not sticklers. When in doubt, choose the conventions of everyday conversation instead of relying on the grammar book. We don't always have to be formal because relatable, every-day language calls for it.

2. Write clearly and precisely

We're here to remove friction. JobPay customers look to us for guidance and advice, so when we explain things, use the most clear and precise language possible. Consistent use of definitive words improves user comprehension and also helps with accessibility and translation. That said, there will be times when we don't know exactly what's going on. That's a great time to push our team to improve the experience so we can speak more directly to the user experience. But when it fails (and it will) and the objective is still unclear, try to be as straightforward as possible.

✅ We can't connect to your JobPay account right now. Give us a few minutes.	❌ Looks like there's a problem with JobPay. Please try again in 15 minutes.

3. Refer to customers as "you" (and other rules for addressing JobPay and third parties)

Use second person for customers, except for buttons and legal stuff. You're probably noticing an overarching theme here: our product experience is a conversation with our customers. We talk directly to them, so we use the second person to address them. Button copy is the exception because sometimes it represents the customer's side of the conversation. Note that using first person in button copy is an option where relevant, not a mandate. Here are a couple situations where first person makes sense:

✅ I agree	❌ You agree
✅ Connect my account	❌ Connect your account

Use first person when we talk about ourselves. Use *we*, *ours*, and *us* when we write as JobPay. It's one way to reinforce writing principle #1, to come across more personal and relatable, because we want customers to know and feel that there are real humans behind JobPay and that we're in this with them and, most importantly, for them. The exception to the rule is when you're referring to the JobPay product, especially in marketing and sales. Use *it,* not *us*.

✅ Still need help? Contact us.	❌ Still need help? Contact JobPay.

Use third person for anyone who isn't the customer, and keep it gender neutral. Use third person when you refer to someone (or something) other than the customer performing the action. We work for small businesses, too, so we use third person when referring to them. Try to keep things gender neutral because it's an awkward spot when we're trying to guess when we don't actually know. Don't use *she/he, s/he*, or *one*. If you can't write around it, then it's okay to use *they, them*, or *their*.

4. Use active voice

We use active voice as much as possible because it's clearer, more direct, and easier to read than passive voice. It's also more conversational. Active voice means the subject of the sentence performs the action. With passive voice, the subject receives the action. Here's a refresher:

✅ Quickly update your account	❌ Your account can be updated quickly

| ✅ Hooray! Your client paid you. 🎉 | ❌ Hooray! A payment was sent to you. |

Active voice holds a lot of power, and one of those powers is conveying responsibility. When we talk to customers, we're as transparent as possible. We don't want them to feel like they did something wrong.

If there's a problem that's our fault, we say so. And if we're taking care of something for them, we explain it.

Voice

When we write for the JobPay app, we want to use a consistent voice and terms. Our approach is rooted in empathy for the people who use our products and knowing that we're champions of the JobPay customer.

Voice is who we are. It defines our relationship with our customers. Our brand character and voice attributes define our voice, and we can adapt it to meet customer needs.

Tone is based on the mood of our customers and can help us understand their emotions to connect with them more. Context is key when exploring mood. We'll explore tone in the next section.

Voice characteristics

Here's how to sound like JobPay (and also how not to).

Professional, but not robotic

For JobPay, "professional" means confident and matter-of-fact. We always want to provide our customers with the best services we can possibly deliver, and that means communicating with them in a way that is both helpful and human. At the same time, we don't want to bore them with over-elaborate language because it's off-putting: a style of writing that "robotic" represents. Here's an example of what we mean:

| ✅ For best results, tell clients you expect on-time payments. | ❌ For optimal outcomes, inform clients of your anticipation for punctual remittances. |

Welcoming, but not over-friendly

"Welcoming" is somewhat of an extension of what we mean by "professional." You don't meet a stranger for the first time and interact with them the same way you do a life-long best friend so we avoid being over-friendly simply because it's a little awkward and unprofessional. In our communications, we should always aim to be inviting, which means leading with empathy and a willingness to help in any way we can.

| ✅ Let's go through a few steps real quick. | ❌ Hey, pal, let's breeze through a few steps together. |

Informative, but not oversharing

Transparency in our communications builds trust. It's really that simple. But there's only so much we can control. We have a lot of people in the company doing a lot of hard work and at the end of the day, we're all human. We make mistakes. We get things wrong. We're not perfect and we're not aiming for perfection. So let's set reasonable expectations about how we communicate when things do go wrong (and they will). It would be unreasonable to share every detail with a customer, but we should always try as hard as we can to offer solutions.

✅ This feature hasn't been updated yet, but we're on it. Check back soon.	❌ This feature hasn't been updated yet because our engineering team said they're dealing with other, more important stuff. Check back tomorrow.

Tone

To recap, tone responds to the emotional state of the customer and it changes based on various situations. It's different from "voice," which defines the JobPay personality (it's how we present ourselves). We can alter the tone for certain situations to connect with customers empathetically. For example, a success message should sound different than an error message because each implies a different emotional state. We're happy or excited when we succeed, and we might be anxious or upset when something's not working the way we expect it to. When writing for JobPay, make sure the tone of your writing sounds like this.

Tone characteristics

About Humor

It can be a great way to create fun and goodwill with customers. On the other hand, humor is often subjective. What's funny to one person might be completely unfunny to another. If you write something humorous, test it out on 4-5 very different people to see if they all think it's funny. Toss it out if anyone objects.

Emotion Words

Refer to this list when pulling together copy for messages. The tone changes because situations change. Sometimes we're celebrating a success, so we can be playful. Other times we've detected something suspicious so we have to state the facts and only the facts because beating around the bush isn't helpful.

- Onboarding/introduction to new features/tools/tooltips — we want to get users excited about using the app so we should encourage user delight.
  - Onboarding: Wave goodbye to manual processes (positive, playful, motivating, reinforce the value of JobPay)
  - Tooltip: Here's a couple things that might interest you. (neutral, but also inviting)

- Success or confirmation — we can be playful here because we're celebrating the user's success, however big or small the success might be, but use your discretion, and consult your colleagues if there's a word or phrase that might push the boundaries too far.
  - Completed a meaningful task (i.e. paid or got paid): Nice! Well done!
  - Everything else: Done! Yay! Woot! Hooray! Nice!
- Our fault/apology/error or when it's unclear who's at fault (remember: no exclamations here) — these messages should be neutral in tone when we don't know who's at fault, but state our own faults with transparency.
  - Oops.
  - Shoot. It looks like…
  - Hmm, that didn't go too well. Let's try again.
- Suspicious activity — these are serious and we have to treat them as such. Don't soften the message and simply state the facts.
  - Hmmm, it looks like… (less serious, just starting investigation)
  - We've closed your account. (If it's serious, don't soften the message at all. Just state the facts.)

Preferred terms & word choice

Provide at least 8 relevant terms that describe what your team should use when writing for JobPay.

DO USE THIS WORD	DON'T USE THESE ALTERNATIVES	SAY WHY (RATIONALE)
Payments	Transaction, remittance	Business owners will see this in situations like "payment is due" and freelancers will see it in situations like "you've received payment…" This term clearly indicates what is required on both ends.
Freelancer	Subcontractor, gig worker, temp worker	We use "freelancer" as a standard so we're clear and consistent across all communications. Also, our research indicates that "freelancer" is understood and preferred by both freelancers and business owners.
Budget	Fund, deposit, savings	Regular use will remind both the freelancer and business owner that management and payment of money is a vital part of the project and partnership.
Client	Customer, colleague, business owner	When communicating with freelancers we always refer to their counterpart as the "client" since it represents a professional business relationship.
App	Application	"Application" is too long. "App" is a short and common way to refer to a mobile tool.

To	In order to	It's simple and succinct 😉
Log in	Sign in	We already use "sign up" so it's easier to differentiate.
Mobile (i.e. mobile phone)	Cell phone	Used to refer to all mobile devices, including tablets.
Secure	Safe	Avoid using "secure" as a definitive state because it's an unreasonable promise to declare that we're always secure. We avoid using the word "safe" because we don't want to overpromise in case we get hacked.
iPhone or Apple	iOS	iOS is a techie term, which some people might not understand.
Invoice	Bill, statement, receipt	We are professional. While we could use "bill" (noun), invoice sounds more business-like without being overly formal.
Track	Navigate, follow	Use in reference to how a freelancer will document their work and how a business owner will be kept up to date. It's a straight forward term everyone understands.
Project	Gig, side-hustle	We always refer to the freelancer's task as a "project." It's professional without being overly formal, and there's an entire section of the app called "projects" so we use "project" for consistency. While we also use terms like "work" and "job," we use them when not referring to the "project" section of the app, or the associated flows within it.
Canceled	Cancelled	Tough one, right? Both are technically correct, but "canceled" is more common in American English. Bonus points because it's one character shorter!

Styles

Follow these style rules when writing for the JobPay app interface.

Page or section headings

- Sentence case
- Use punctuation sparingly
    - Don't use punctuation in headings unless the heading is written in a conversational style with more than one sentence, or if the sentence is a question. It's okay to use commas and exclamation points, but only when they're absolutely necessary — use your best judgment, and

don't be afraid to get a second opinion from the team. One simple guideline: never include more than one exclamation point per screen, and save them for delightful, or "success" experiences. Remember that an exclamation can also be used as an alert (i.e. Danger!), but let's avoid exclamations for such experiences. We prefer to alleviate any customer anxiety, not inspire it.

- Begin phrases with action words (verbs!), unless the heading is a question or is a declaration.

| ✅Want to add a client?	❌ Time to add a client?
✅Here's what you'll earn for this project	❌You'll earn this amount:
✅Nice! You created your first project.	❌Created your first project!
✅Invite your client	❌It's time to invite a client

Subheadings or form labels

- Sentence case
- Bold
- No punctuation
- Context is everything here. Let's make them clear and straight to the point.
- For form labels, no more than a 3 words
- Subheadings can be a short phrase

✅ **Name**	❌Type your name below
✅ **Message**	❌You can type your message in the little box down there
✅ **Project details**	❌Here are all your project details
✅ **Invite others to collaborate**	❌You can click the button below to add other people to this project

App sections, table headings, reminder messages, and warning messages (!)

- All caps
- Bold
- No punctuation
- Context is everything here. Let's make them clear and straight to the point.
- Each of these sections should be as short as possible
  - 1 word for an app section
  - 1-3 words for a table heading
  - No more than 4 words for a reminder and warning message.

See the example below:
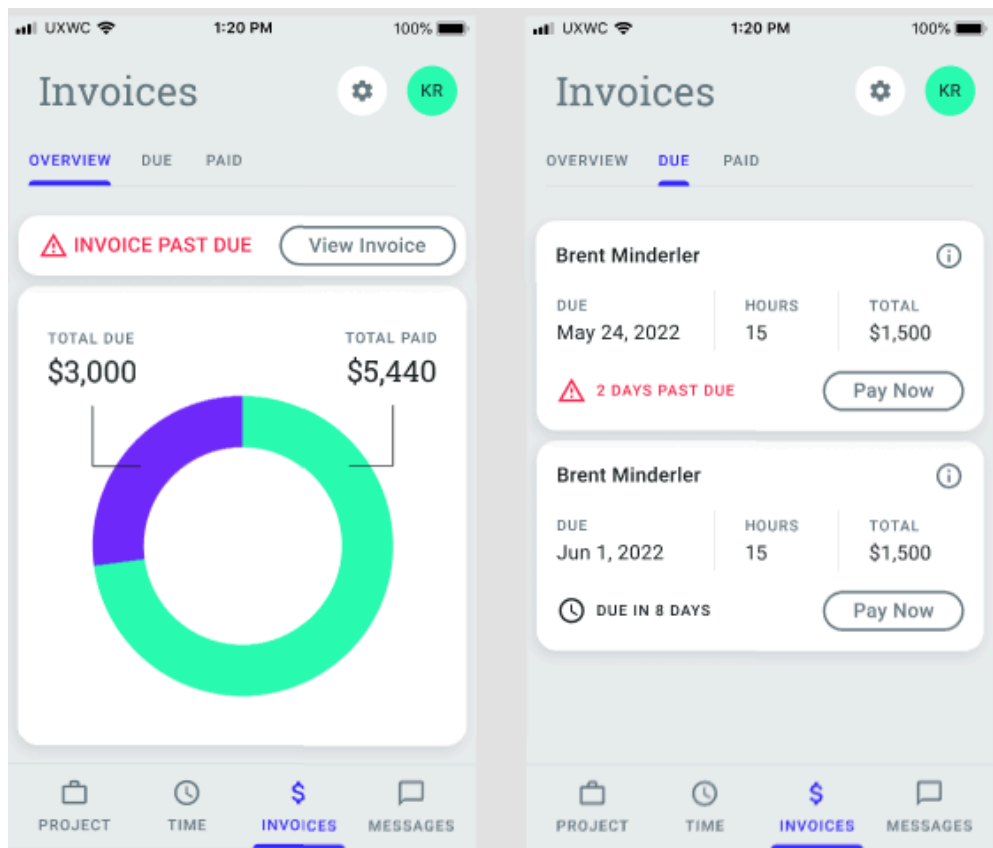
Onscreen instructions (text below headings)

- Sentence case
- Use punctuation at the end of sentences or phrases
- Focus on the objective, but ensure they're also positive and delightful

✅Calculate time worked and send or receive payment requests when the job's done.	❌When the job's done, you can send or receive payments and track time worked automatically.

Tooltips

- Sentence case
- Use punctuation
- Focus on the objective, but ensure they're also inspiring and delightful
- Use tooltips for onboarding new users to introduce them to different sections and subsections of the app, to notify them of new features, to remind them of previously unexplored sections of the app, or to alleviate potential anxiety about what happens next.

| ✅ We'll send an invite and let you know when they join the project.	❌ Invitation will send after you click the button, we'll let you know what happens

Button text

- Title Case
- No punctuation
- Lead button text with verbs and keep them short; about 3 words max
  - Exception: "Next" is acceptable for progression through a flow, and "OK", or "Done" is acceptable for a simple confirmation screen at the end of the flow (i.e. the user sends a project approval to the client and the JoPay app tells the user that the approval was sent).

✅ Add Project	❌ Add project
✅ Log In	❌ Log in
✅ Sign Up	❌ Sign up

Date formats

Date formats vary in different countries and cultures. When we write the date 8/4/2023, it could be interpreted as August 4th, 2023 or April 8th, 2023. Both are correct in different parts of the world. To avoid confusion, we'll write dates with the month abbreviated with 3 letters, like this: "Aug 4, 2023".

In the situation where there's not enough space, or where the abbreviated month has already been used, we'll revert to the U.S. *month/day* format, i.e. *8/4,* for August 4th, 2023. See below for an example:
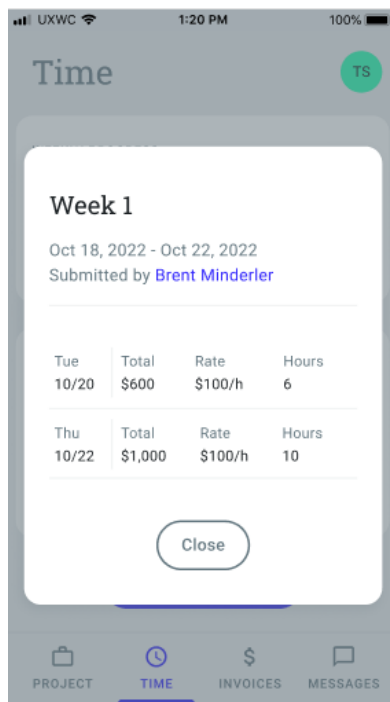
Date localization

The Product Localization team is responsible for creating product UI content in non-English languages by localizing externalized code strings provided by JobPay product engineers.

In order to accurately localize date and time formatting for different locales (country and language), we require engineers to ensure that all content containing the date and time references are not hardcoded and reference built-in i18n libraries/APIs for automatic format.

Currency formats

Always use the appropriate currency symbol ($, €, £) according to the customer's location, followed by the number amount with no space between the symbol and the number (exception: Brazil includes a space between the currency symbol and the number amount). Include a "-" in front of negative amounts.

When there are 4 or more digits, or a cent value, format according to the guidelines below:

United States

- $10
- -$10
- $2,000.15

Canada

- $10
- -$10

- $2,000.15

Australia

- $10
- -$10
- $2,000.15

European Union

- €10
- -€10
- €2.000,15

UK

- £10
- -£10
- £2,000.15

Brazil

- R$ 10
- R$ -10
- R$ 2.000,15

Never use slang terms to refer to currency, like "buck" for the dollar, or "quid" for the British Pound.