Southwest®

Writing in our Voice

January 2021

Table of contents

Brand Voice Foundation 3

Brand Voice Playbook 7

Other Resources 20

Brand Voice Foundation

Our Brand Platform remains at the core of all that we do

Purpose

To connect People to what's important in their lives through friendly, reliable, and low cost air travel

Brand Idea

Give the World Heart

Commitments

Lead by Example

Hospitality that goes above and beyond

People-first

Meeting you eye to eye, doing what's right with transparency

True to Principles

Low fares + great Service and a Customer-friendly experience

Connect to what matters

Bring people together over common ground with an open mind

Freedom

To be yourself and fly how, when, and where you want

Design/Experience Principles

Thoughtful

Effortless experiences with guards down

Human

A personal touch, inspired by you

Direct

Doing it our way, the right way

Light-Hearted

Engage with warmth, optimism, and intention

Vision

To become the world's most loved, most efficient, and most profitable airline

The Southwest Way Values are a reflection of our Heart

Values

Me
How I Show Up

Pride
Have a strong work ethic, take initiative, and be accountable
- *We are dependable and engaged*
- *We put our Hearts into our work*
- *We do not blame others*

Integrity
Act like an owner, choose to do right, and be courageous
- *We do not walk past problems*
- *We spend Company money wisely*
- *We do not sacrifice our integrity for results*

Humility
Don't take yourself too seriously, keep perspective, and don't be a jerk
- *We keep our egos in check*
- *We understand it's not all about us*
- *We bring a sense of fun to hard work*

We
How We Treat Each Other

Teamwork
Practice civility, embrace Team over self, and be inclusive
- *We assume positive intent*
- *We appreciate the strengths of our Cohearts*
- *We avoid tribalism*

Honesty
Speak up, be transparent, and tell the truth
- *We handle issues proactively*
- *We seek the truth and do not gossip*
- *We are straightforward and sincere*

Service with LUV
Practice Hospitality, live by The Golden Rule, and don't be rude
- *We make others feel welcomed, cared for, and appreciated*
- *We treat our Customers with respect*
- *We embrace and support our communities*

Southwest
How Southwest Succeeds

Efficiency
Don't make the easy hard, keep costs low, and stay agile
- *We embrace simplicity*
- *We look for ways to improve*
- *We are flexible and open to change*

Discipline
Be safe, focused, and reliable
- *We comply with policies, procedures, and regulations*
- *We consistently produce high-quality work*
- *We do not get distracted from our work*

Excellence
Get results, win the right way, and kick tail
- *We do our best every day*
- *We are not complacent*
- *We know what it takes to win*

Voice is one of the ways our Customers feel and experience our unique Brand

Brand voice is a meaningful tool in our toolbox

Internal

Our Brand Platform



What we say
[Brand Messaging / Messaging Architecture]

+

How we look
[Brand Visual System]



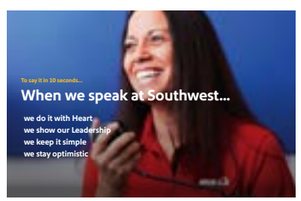
+

How we act
[Our Values: Southwest Way]



+

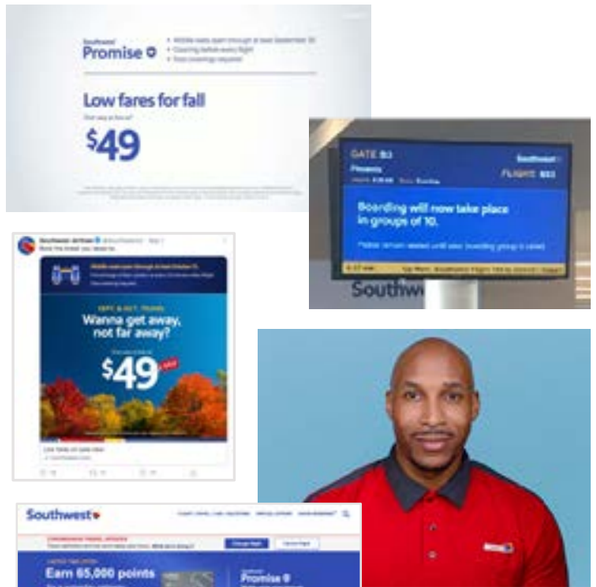
How we say it
[Brand Voice]



External

- Advertising/marketing
- Social media
- Airport and inflight
- Mobile app and website
- Customer relations

...and more!



Brand Voice Playbook

These Voice guidelines will help all Southwest communicators to get on the same page about our one-of-a-kind voice.

Whenever we're writing, we want to

Give the world Heart

From our Brand Platform, this statement guides everything we do at Southwest, including how we communicate. Our writing should always ladder back up to it, so keep it in mind when you're putting pen to paper. It's what keeps us sounding like our unique selves, and unlike the rest of the industry.

Never seen our Brand Platform? Flip to the next page to find it.

Get to know our Brand Platform, it guides everything we do

Purpose

To connect People to what's important in their lives through friendly, reliable, and low cost air travel

Brand Idea

Give the World Heart

Commitments

Lead by Example

Hospitality that goes above and beyond

People-first

Meeting you eye to eye, doing what's right with transparency

True to Principles

Low fares + great Service and a Customer-friendly experience

Connect to what matters

Bring people together over common ground with an open mind

Freedom

To be yourself and fly how, when, and where you want

Design/Experience Principles

Thoughtful

Effortless experiences with guards down

Human

A personal touch, inspired by you

Direct

Doing it our way, the right way

Light-Hearted

Engage with warmth, optimism, and intention

Vision

To become the world's most loved, most efficient, and most profitable airline

Brand idea informs our personality

Everything we say should sound like it comes from a single person (the shining example of someone who Gives the World Heart).

Commitments inform content

Everything we communicate should support one or more Commitment (It's *what* we say).

Design principles inform tone

How we communicate should be crafted to reflect the design principles (It's *how* we say it).

We've broken down these guidelines into three pieces

Narrative

A high-level, emotive paragraph that gives a picture of who we are when we communicate

Sentence

If you had to say it in 10 seconds, this is how you could sum up our Voice

Cues

12 writing tactics that are uniquely "us"

Writing from the Southwest point of view

At Southwest Airlines, our Heart is in everything we do.

As communicators, how do we deliver that? We greet everyone with a welcoming smile and open arms—like we'd want to be treated. Because we know we're all in this together, working hard to make it a great day.

Whenever we write, we put People first.

That means taking a moment to put ourselves in another person's shoes to make sure we're connecting. Always writing with warmth and understanding.

We speak like the Leaders we are:

Confident, but never full of ourselves. Holding ourselves to a higher standard. Sticking to our word no matter what. Going above and beyond to get the job done.

Maybe a little humor—but only when it feels right.

We're sure to communicate so People understand what we mean—and know they can trust what we say.

That's why we keep things simple and direct. We'd rather be straightforward instead of saying too much and missing the point.

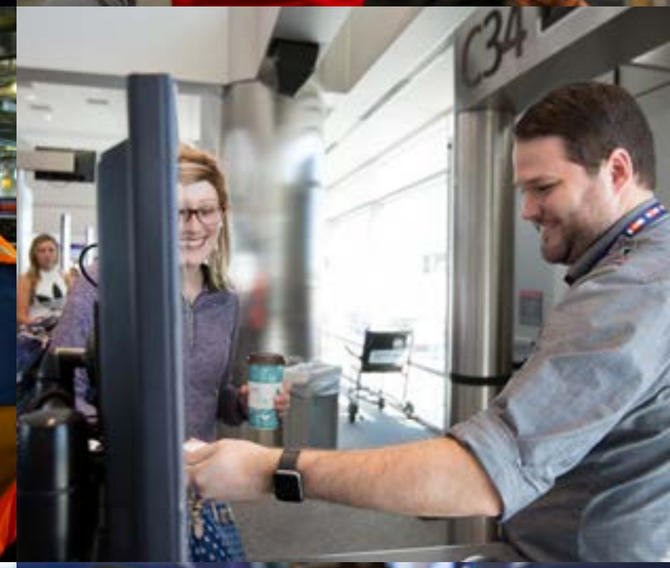
Our writing should be upbeat and optimistic. It's part of what makes us, Southwest.

We know that when we stay positive, we usually get positive results.













To say it in 10 seconds...

When we speak at Southwest...

we do it with Heart
we show our Leadership
we keep it simple
we stay optimistic

Ready to get started?

Make sure you're always doing these three things when you're writing for Southwest.

Consider the moment

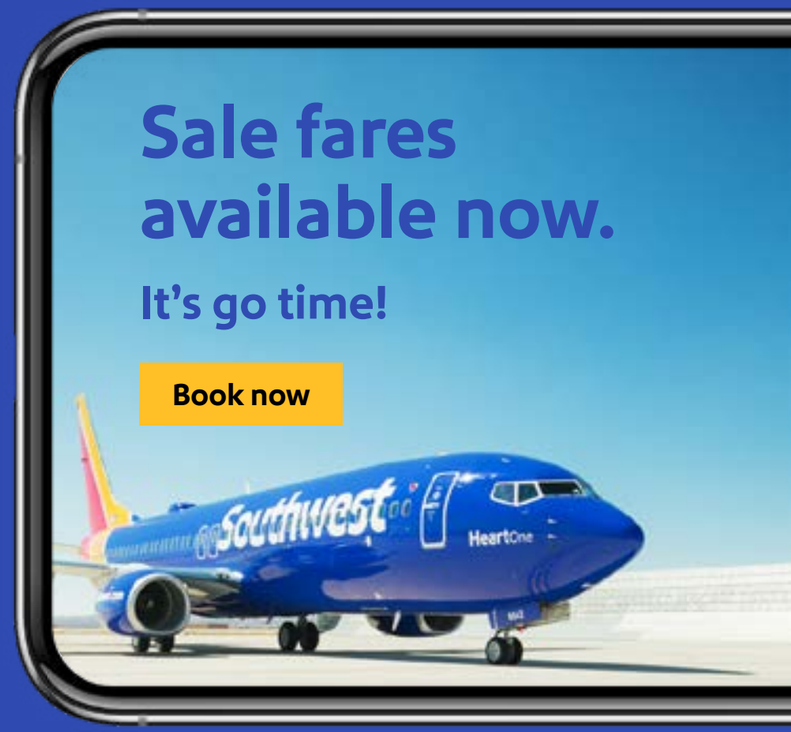
Before (and after) you write something, pause to think about who you're talking to, why you're saying it, and where they'll see it. What would they want to hear? What's the mood of the situation?

Talk like a regular person

We're always real and relatable, so we're conversational and never talk over anyone's head. Even when we need to be more buttoned up, we keep the jargon to a minimum and watch out for "corporate-speak."

Keep things active and interesting

We're an on-the-go company and that shows up in how we communicate. That's why we use an active Voice and energetic pacing to keep engaged.



Heads up! Not every cue will work for every audience. But don't worry; you'll know how to use most of them right off the bat.

Speak with Heart

No matter the situation, we make sure People feel welcomed and heard. That means communicating with warmth and Heart.

Make everyone feel welcomed

We want everybody to feel included, never left out or unheard. When we write, we treat People as individuals and avoid terms like “Valued Customers” or “Longtime Employees” that sound generic or group them together.

Do the right thing

We never forget The Golden Rule. That’s why we listen and connect to everyone—so we know how to make their day better, not just offer cookie-cutter answers or halfway solutions.

Say it with warmth and understanding

Think about how you talk to an old family friend. There’s a friendly person-to-person connection, no matter what you’re talking about. It’s not cute or lovey-dovey, but it does show you care about People.

Southwest®

Your upcoming Southwest flight has a new departure time of 9:20PM. We know delays are frustrating, and we apologize.

Show our Leadership

We set a great example by looking after others and working together to solve problems.

Be confident and humble

We've always had a lot to be proud of and we mostly let our accomplishments and differences do the talking; we're not the type to point fingers or name call. That doesn't mean we don't celebrate though; when the moment is right, we're proud to shine a big spotlight on something awesome.

Say it clearly and directly

People are looking to us for guidance in all kinds of situations. So we tell it like it is, get to the point, and admit if we made a mistake. It's what People have come to expect from us, with good reason.

Share the destination, not just the journey

When communicating a lot of information, it's helpful to start by explaining "why" the information is important. Paint the bigger picture, call out positive benefits and outcomes before diving into the details. If you lead with the "why," things are easier to follow.

We don't believe fun trips should involve tough choices, like which swimsuit to bring. Take all of them—**two bags fly free.**

Keep it simple

The simpler things are, the easier they are to understand.

Be transparent to build trust

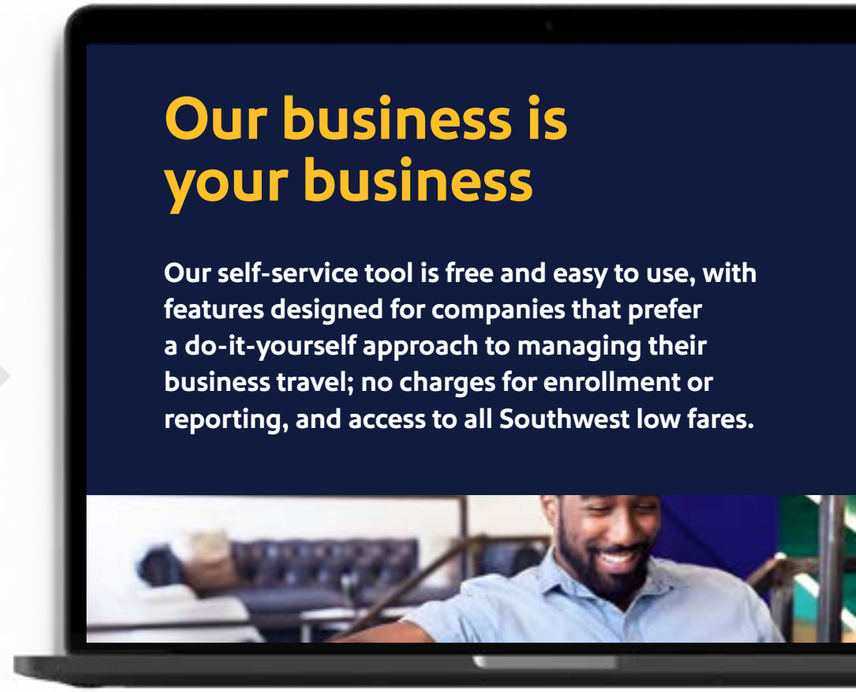
When we're open and honest, our Customers know they can rely on us. And when we have nothing to hide, we don't need lots of words to get our point across.

Stick to the simple things

At Southwest, what you see is what you get. There's no B.S. in what we say. We write in an easy to "get" way, sticking to concrete, tangible things. Don't use fancy words or make People think too hard.

Don't make it a novel

Explaining something? Don't go on and on. Be direct and make your words work harder. Not only does it tell People what they need to know, but it saves their time.



Keep it positive

We're known for our upbeat and optimistic personality. It's a big part of who we are and it keeps People smiling.

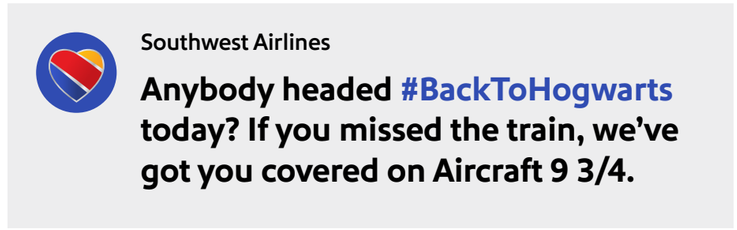
Have fun with words

When time or space are a bit tight, a clever one or two-word headline can easily get our message across (and show we don't take ourselves too seriously). So if the perfect word doesn't exist, close the dictionary, and take a little license to create one.



Stay current about pop culture

Now and then (and especially on social media) we add pop culture references into our writing to help show our "in-the-know" side. When you do it, just make sure it's true to who we are and doesn't get into divisive subjects. Basically, if you wouldn't say it at the dinner table, don't write it.



Make wit part of the process

We make people smile, but we have wit that makes people giggle or even laugh out loud. Our humor is smart, fun, well-timed, and relatable. This side of us makes us memorable and real. When thinking about our humor, we fall into the camp of laugh out loud humor, an instinctual laugh – it's an unexpected, authentic laugh, as opposed to overly silly.



Keep it positive - Make wit part of the process

Bringing our humor to life.

When thinking about our humor, we fall into the camp of laugh out loud humor, an instinctual laugh – it's an unexpected, authentic laugh, as opposed to overly silly. Examples would be:









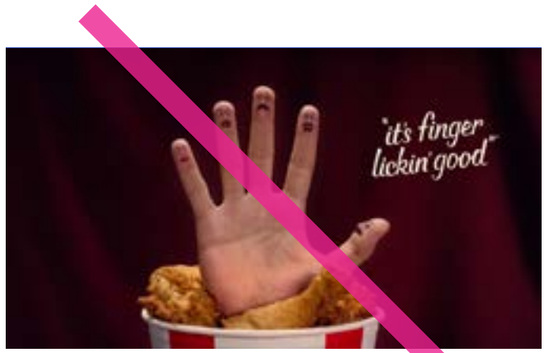
We avoid things that could come off as overly silly, off-color or forced, so it doesn't go completely wrong.



Kraft: We are not off-color or scandalous



Progressive: We don't live outside reality



KFC: We don't support overly silly humor



Skittles: We are not corny

Here’s how you write from the Southwest POV

We’ve put all the cues on one page so you can flip to it when you need a refresher.

To Give the world Heart when we write, we...

always

Consider the moment

Talk like a regular person

Keep things active and interesting



Here’s a good rule of thumb to keep us sounding like us: if you could put another airline's logo on what you just wrote, then rethink it.
We should always sound unique.

and...

Speak with Heart

Make everyone feel welcomed

Do the right thing

Say it with warmth and understanding

Show our Leadership

Be confident and humble

Say it clearly and directly

Share the destination, not just the journey

Keep it simple

Be transparent to build trust

Stick to the simple things

Don’t make it a novel

Keep it positive

Have fun with words

Stay current about pop culture

Make wit part of the process

Other Resources

Southwest Brand Lexicon Bank

By infusing uniquely Southwest words into our communications, we can bring our personality forward and enhance the consistency of the Customer Experience.

Unique Brand Terms

Wanna Get Away® | Heart | Low fares | Companion Pass® | Trans**fare**ncy® | Promise

Driving Demand/Travel Inspiration

Flexible | Freedom | Connect | Dream | Rewarding

Customer Experience

Superfan | Greeting = Hi there | Goodbye = See you soon | Love

*While these terms aren't ownable on their own, when these personal terms are used with surround storytelling in our brand tone, they become personable and welcoming.

What belongs on this list?

Ask yourself, would this word or phrase work if it came from another airline (e.g., American)? If so, it's not unique to our brand.

Note

This list is not intended as comprehensive, nor will these words always be appropriate for every channel or context.

Our Voice is a very particular one, and the words and phrases we use are extra important. If you've got any questions, feel free to get in touch.

You can reach us at (BrandIdentity-DG@wnco.com).