

17 tips for increasing the selling power of your ad copy

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



The following excerpt is from Craig Simpson and Brian Kurtz's book . Buy it now from | |

Whether you're doing the writing yourself or you've decided to hire a writer, see if you can glean some valuable insights from the following list of 17 methods.

1. Use present tense, second person. When we read any kind of promotional copy, our favorite word is " you." When we see " you," it means the writer is talking directly to us. It encourages us to picture ourselves with the product. There may be times when it's appropriate to use the third person -- for example when talking about " those people" who don't have the finer taste or understanding that " you" do or when explaining the faults of the competition. In general, try to stick to " you" and speak in the present tense as much as possible, not about the past or future.

Don't say: Buyers will experience vibrant health with a daily dose of aloe vera juice.

Do say: You experience vibrant health with a daily dose of aloe vera juice.

2. Use a simple style of writing. The purpose of your ad is to sell a product or service, not to impress the reader with your brilliant writing. Also, you want your writing to carry the readers along without putting up any roadblocks to their understanding or interest. If your writing is dense, flowery, or filled with complex images readers can't relate to, you're going to discourage them from moving forward.

3. Use simple words. This is similar to the previous point. If your writing is loaded with long, pompous words that most people don't understand, prospects won't keep reading because it seems like too much work. Make it easy for people to read the ad, get the message and want to follow your call to action.

4. Give free information. To get something, you have to give something. To get your readers' attention, you have to give them something to ensure it will be worth their while to read your copy -- and one thing you can give them is free information. Tell them something useful right at the beginning. You can even write that part of your letter in editorial style, rather than making it obvious that you're trying to sell them something.

Another method is to promise at the beginning that they'll find valuable information later on in the piece, e. g., " Keep reading for the list of 10 foods you should always avoid if you suffer from heartburn."

This is especially easy for online marketers, who can offer a downloadable free premium. Online marketers today have also figured out that if they don't give away a lot of free information before getting readers to the point of sale, there's a big chance they'll lose the prospect before getting to the moment of truth.

5. Make your copy specific. We're so accustomed to seeing wild advertising claims, especially on the internet, that we don't really believe them anymore. To counteract skepticism, one ad expert advises saying, " 97, 482 people have bought one of these appliances" rather than " Nearly 100, 000

of these appliances have been sold.” The first statement sounds like a fact. The second sounds like copywriting bluster. Simply put, being more precise with exact numbers or “ real data,” rather than rounding up or being general, will always enhance your copy.

6. Write long copy. You’ve probably heard that copy can neither be too long nor too short, just too boring. But if it’s done intelligently, longer copy does a much better job of selling than shorter copy -- if it’s laid out attractively, it’s always more effective.

And you can get the best of both worlds by using headlines and subheads to create a smaller, quicker-to-read piece within the longer piece. Then you’ll appeal to the “ skimmers” while still providing plenty of sales talk to those who were interested and want more information. This is especially important when sending emails or setting up web pages. These can be difficult to read if the copy isn’t broken up.

7. Write more copy than you need to fill the space. Write more copy than you need, then refine it down -- copy gets better when you start long and then cut it because it gets tighter and more to the point. Don’t worry about length while you’re writing. Just put down all your ideas in as much detail as you want. Then go back and edit, refining as you go, taking out the excess, rephrasing and getting your points in the most efficient order.

8. Avoid helping your competitors. Don’t spend a lot of time talking in general terms about how great your *type* of product is. Talk more specifically about all the great features of your own product.

Let's say you're selling a home cleaning service. If you spend most of your pitch describing how nice a homeowner's life will be with someone else doing the cleaning, they might agree, go online to see who else is offering cleaning services in the area and end up hiring someone else! Instead, use your copy to focus on the great features of *your* cleaning service and how you're so much better than anyone else.

9. Make every advertisement a complete sales pitch. Don't assume your prospect has ever read anything else about you or knows anything about the advantages you offer. Don't talk about half the things that make you stand out in one piece and the other half in another promotional piece. For all you know, you'll only have this one shot to make this sale or get someone to your blog. Always make the most of it.

10. Urge the reader to act. Every promotional piece should have a clear call to action: Act now! Call today! Order while supplies last! You've spent your entire piece getting your readers' attention and explaining why they should want your product or service. Now put the bow on the package -- tell them what you want them to do. And if you can add a sense of urgency by telling them it's a limited-time offer, supplies are limited, or these special prices can't last long, all the better. Without a clear call to action, the rest of the piece, as good as it may be, could be a complete waste.

11. Put captions under illustrations. As advertising expert, David Ogilvy once said: " More people read the captions under illustrations than read the body

copy, so never use an illustration without putting a caption under it. Your caption should include the brand name and/or the promise.”

12. Use mail order methods in direct mail advertising. Rules of good advertising, e. g., a strong headline and opening sentence, work for every medium, including online advertising.

13. Overstatement vs. understatement. Avoid advertising bluster. Give supported facts and go for believability.

14. Avoid trick slogans. Don't use slogans that are obviously untrue. Ad expert John Caples offered the example of a mint manufacturer whose slogan was “ On every tongue” -- an obvious impossibility. A more effective slogan would have been “ The flavor lasts.”

15. Get help from others. Find a sounding board to give you honest opinions on what you write.

16. Don't say that a salesperson will call. You'll cut down responses to your offer for a free item if you tell prospects you'll be following up with a call (or a letter or email). Don't tell them your sales plan. Caples said this could reduce responses to coupons by 75 percent.

17. Study the selling copy in mail order catalogs. At the time Caples was writing ads, mail order catalogs had the best copywriters. His advice simply meant you should learn how to write great copy by reading the best. That's great advice to follow today in your own medium.