

Copywriting.

*Techniques for writing
effective advertising copy.*

A few words before we begin.

Writing copy can be a daunting task at first. Writing the first word, line, sentence or paragraph requires creativity and confidence as well as a fair amount of concentration.

Here are a few copywriting techniques to get you started. The following is by no means exhaustive, but it can offer you a useful approach that will get your creative juices flowing. The process is the same whether you are creating copy for print or broadcast.

Creating your first draft.

Before you begin creating your first draft, prepare the material you have researched from the brief. You may want to start writing immediately. This is not a good idea. The more work you do before you start writing the more polished your first draft will be.

Identify all the raw material and where the content may overlap. Make a list of important points and note them down on a sheet of paper. Group them under suitable categories such as 'USP', 'key messages', 'target audience', 'supporting information' and 'tone of voice'. This will extract core content and messages. Keep in mind who you are speaking to. Once completed thoroughly, you will be in a position to begin.

Take the plunge and make a start. As you progress you will reshape and refine your copy time and time again. Your notes will give you the highly condensed raw material you need. All you need to add to these is creative thinking. The following will help you make a start.

Plain copy.

The most basic approach to writing effective copy is to simply introduce the product without gimmick or style. It's a simple presentation of the facts and benefits. There is no story. There is no conversation. No superlative claims. Just fact. This can be useful when your headline and imagery are striking in their own right.

This copy isn't going to win any literary awards, but it will get the job done. It will give the audience the information they need to make an informed decision about the product, service or advice. It can be a good starting point if you can't think of any initial ideas. You can also use its mundane nature to your advantage.



Storytelling copy.

Everything is story.

Conversations, presentations, advertisements, news reports, Facebook updates, they are all some form of story; a message with meaning we want to share with other people.

Why storytelling in advertising is so effective.

Everyone loves a good story. Information has been passed down through the centuries via storytelling - from prehistoric times to modern day. We all enjoy hearing about interesting people and interesting events, especially if there is a challenge in the story that we can relate to. Just write about how the challenge was overcome and make the product central to the story.

Storytelling often revolves loosely around this structure.

Opening: Introduce the pain. Show how the character of the story had a normal life, then how that life was adversely affected by events

Highlight the conflict: How is the life of the main character threatened or challenged if they do not respond to the problem? What does the journey look like as they tackle this challenge?

Include dialogue: People are drawn to conversations in a story and life in general. We love eavesdropping. It's human interest at its best - listening to two people talking to each other.

Provide the solution: Finally, your product is introduced as the cure for your character's problem. Your story doesn't have to be dramatic. It just has to be interesting to your target audience. And this is where your research pays off.

Ikea. Hare

(inspired by Roots Manuva - Witness the Fitness)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQSgf3_5KBk

Skittles. Settle It



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7BVxLyIgqM>

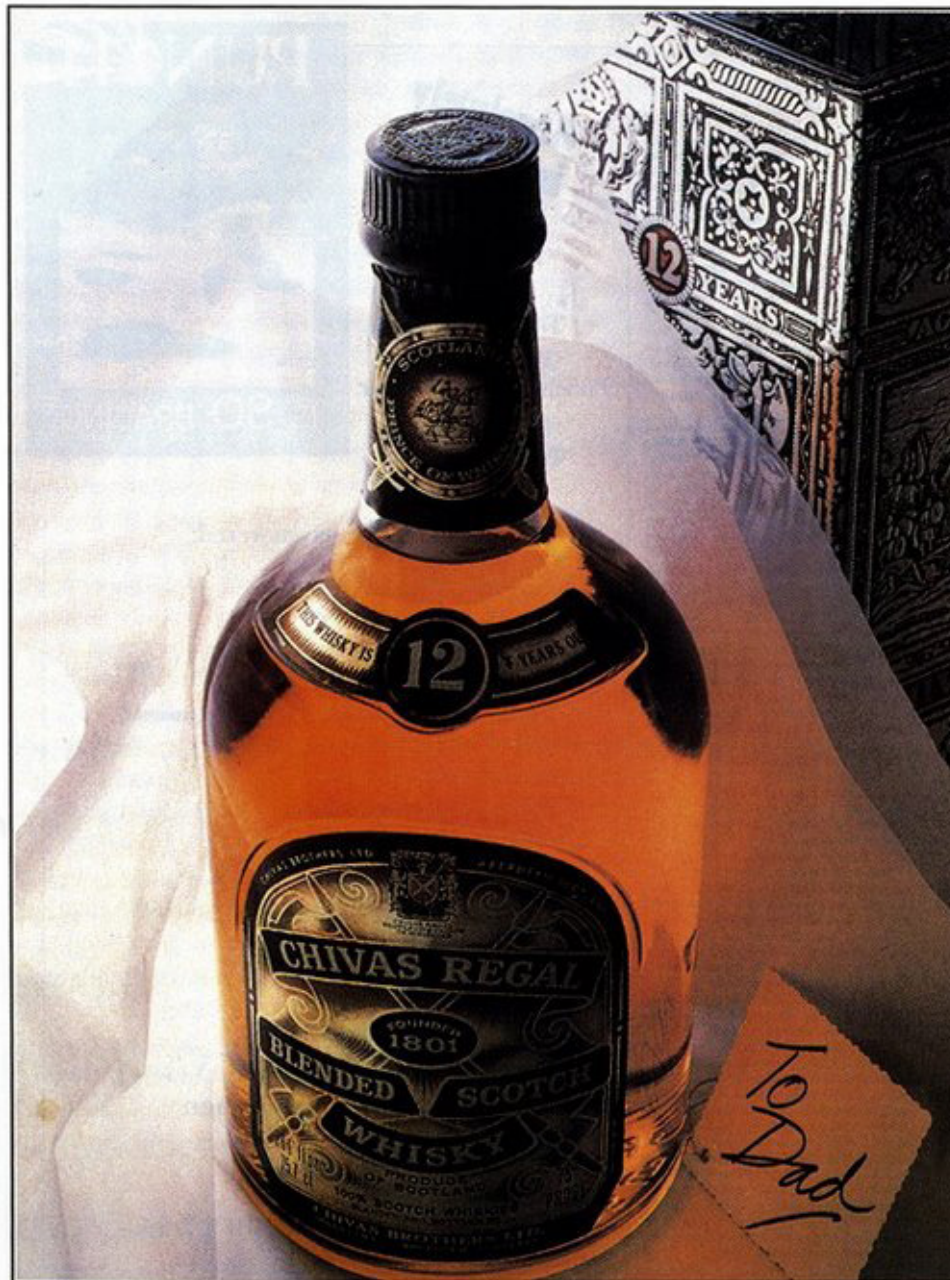
Conversational copy.

In this style of copy, you write as if there is a conversation between two people: the copywriter and the reader. The language here would be no different than a friend sitting down for lunch. It is a straightforward approach that tries to identify with the reader.

Keep in mind that you don't have to be a polished copywriter to create effective conversational copy. You just need to be authentic and committed to making your point. You can develop this technique by listening to other peoples' conversations. You can even record a conversation about the product, transcribe that conversation, and use it as a rough draft to work on.

The following example was written by renowned copywriter David Abbott in 1980. His inspiration was his Dad. The conversational tone is authentic because it's written from a personal perspective.

Chivas Regal – Fathers Day Ad



Because I've known you all my life.

Because a red Rudge bicycle once made me the happiest boy on the street.

Because you let me play cricket on the lawn.

Because you used to dance in the kitchen with a tea-towel round your waist.

Because your cheque book was always busy on my behalf.

Because our house was always full of books and laughter.

Because of countless Saturday mornings you gave up to watch a small boy play rugby.

Because you never expected too much of me or let me get away with too little.

Because of all the nights you sat working at your desk while I lay sleeping in my bed.

Because you never embarrassed me by talking about the birds and the bees.

Because I know there's a faded newspaper clipping in your wallet about my scholarship.

Because you always made me

polish the heels of my shoes as brightly as the toes.

Because you've remembered my birthday 38 times out of 38.

Because you still hug me when we meet.

Because you still buy my mother flowers.

Because you've more than your fair share of grey hairs and I know who helped put them there.

Because you're a marvellous grandfather.

Because you made my wife feel one of the family.

Because you wanted to go to McDonalds the last time I bought you lunch.

Because you've always been there when I've needed you.

Because you let me make my own mistakes and never once said "I told you so."

Because you still pretend you only need glasses for reading.

Because I don't say thank you as often as I should.

Because it's Father's Day.

Because if you don't deserve Chivas Regal, who does?

Innocent Drinks have mastered the art of creating the warm and friendly conversational tone that makes their audience feel special on multiple platforms, especially social media.

Innocent Drinks

goodness in a nutshell



Oh hi. Been standing there long? Feeling a bit parched? How about a naturally delicious and fresh-tasting coconut water, to give you that straight out of the coconut feeling? We've gone a bit nuts for it because it helps keep you hydrated, and a hydrated you feels better than a dehydrated you. That's just common sense. Turns out stuff this good really does grow on trees.

 tastes good, does good

This coconut water is a source of potassium which contributes to normal muscle function, and normal functioning of the nervous system.



We're crazy about vegetables.
We can't hide it and we don't care who
knows it. We love vegetables and we want
to shout it from the rooftops. We want to go
on long walks and talk about our hopes and
dreams with vegetables. We want to whisk
vegetables away on city breaks and
surprise them with hot air balloon rides.
We want to make vegetables our emergency
contact on all the forms we fill in.
We're so into vegetables that we're even
adding them to fruit and making smoothies
that taste good and do you good. Because
we like you too. But we really REALLY like
vegetables, we hope that's clear.

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Long copy.

Long copy ads come from a past tradition of communicating lots of facts. These type of ads are no longer prevalent in advertising, although occasionally they are used where a longer explanation is required. The fundamental premise behind long copy is “The more you tell, the more you sell.” Ads that are long on facts and benefits are often for niche products or for when a brand wants to communicate an explanation for something – often a mistake!

Unlike a face-to-face conversation with a person, a written ad has only one chance to convert a reader. If you get in front of the reader, you've got to lay it all out on the table. In a conversation a lot of questions would be asked. Therefore a long copy ad anticipates those questions, and answers them in the copy.

Tesco print ad

We apologise

You have probably read or heard that we have had a serious problem with three frozen beef burger products that we sell in stores in the UK and Ireland.

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) has told us that a number of products they have recently tested from one of our suppliers contained horsemeat.

While the FSAI has said that the products pose no risk to public health, we appreciate that, like us, our customers will find this absolutely unacceptable.

The products in our stores were Tesco Everyday Value 8 x Frozen Beef Burgers (397g), Tesco 4 x Frozen Beef Quarter Pounders (454g) and a branded product, Flamehouse Frozen Chargrilled Quarter Pounders.

We have immediately withdrawn from sale all products from the supplier in question, from all our stores and online.

If you have any of these products at home, you can take them back to any of our stores at any time and get a full refund. You will not need a receipt and you can bring back just the packaging.

We and our supplier have let you down and we apologise.

If you have any concerns, you can find out how to contact us at the bottom of this page, or go to any of our Customer Service Desks in store, or ask to speak to your Store Manager.

So here's our promise. We will find out exactly what happened and, when we do, we'll come back and tell you.

And we will work harder than ever with all our suppliers to make sure this never happens again.

The Tesco logo, consisting of the word "TESCO" in a bold, red, sans-serif font, with a blue horizontal line and three diagonal blue lines underneath.

Contact Customer Service hotline: 0800 505555 Email: customer.service@tesco.co.uk Twitter: [@uktesco](https://twitter.com/uktesco) Facebook: facebook.com/tesco

PA

Literary copy.

As David Ogilvy once said, “We sell, or else.” But we should always sell with style. It is a balance of two opposites: the practical with the poetic, marketing with creativity. This is advertising craft. The poetic approach has proved to be effective for many large brand campaigns for companies such as McDonalds, Ikea and Guinness.

McDonalds - Just Passing By



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjmcKg_Qo40

Endorsements and testimonials.

Endorsements and testimonials can help persuade audiences. Celebrities are often used for **endorsements** where they become the mouthpiece for the brand. Beware, as this is often an expensive route paved with danger, hence the origination of 'death or disgrace' contracts!

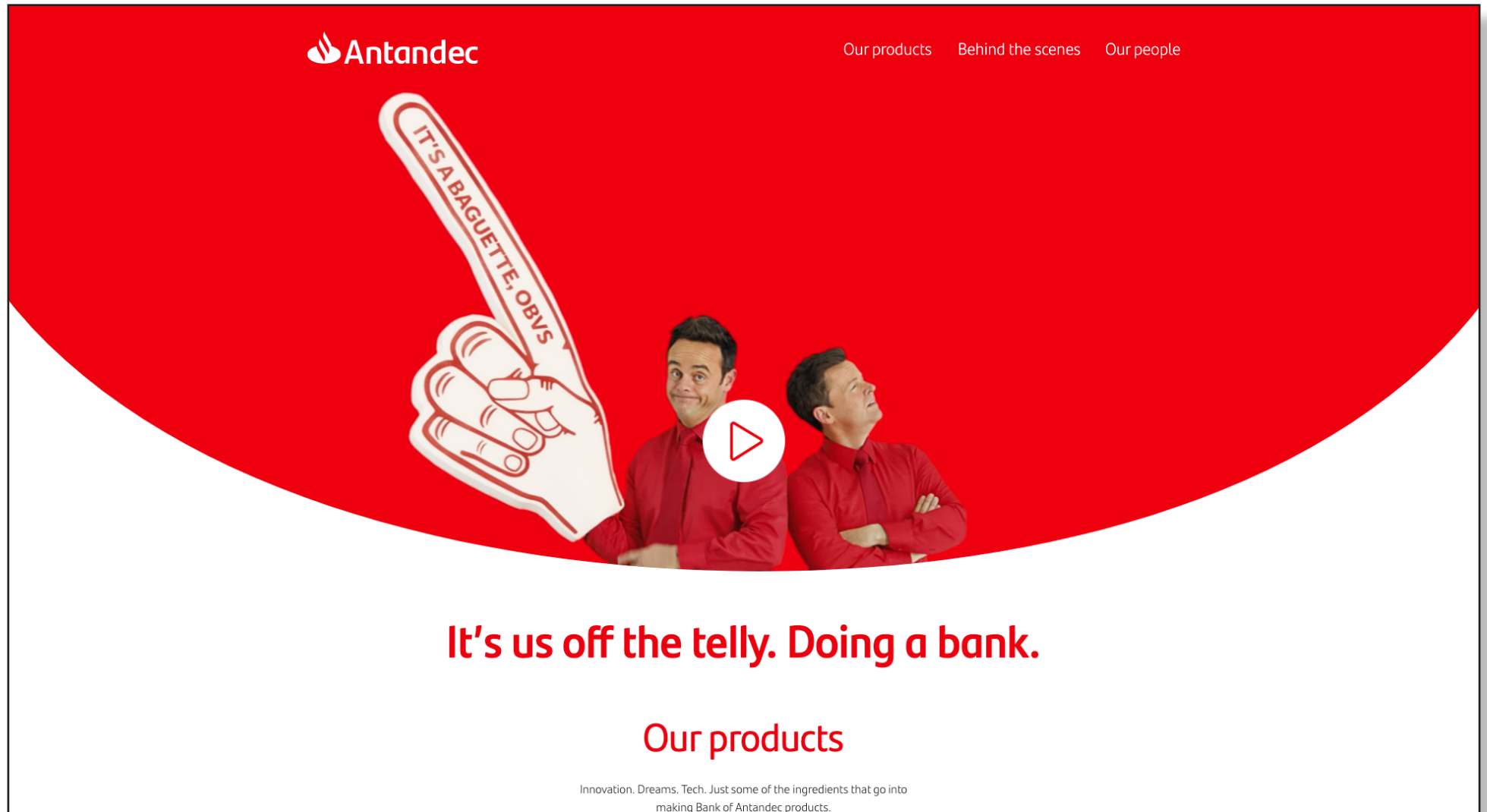
Testimonials are when people who have used the product or service tell us of their experience, eg. "I've tried it and now my wrinkles have virtually disappeared." This is now more effective online, in the form user/purchaser of reviews.

Santander - Antandec TV ad



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ae_8bFXtAM0

Antandec website



Endorsements and testimonials.

The work and the copywriting does not have to be pedestrian. When done with thought and courage it can also transform culture. Nike's work with NFL player Colin Kaepernick elevated the brand to be a thought leader in race equality and global politics which later had great influence across the globe.

Colin Kaepernick Nike Commercial

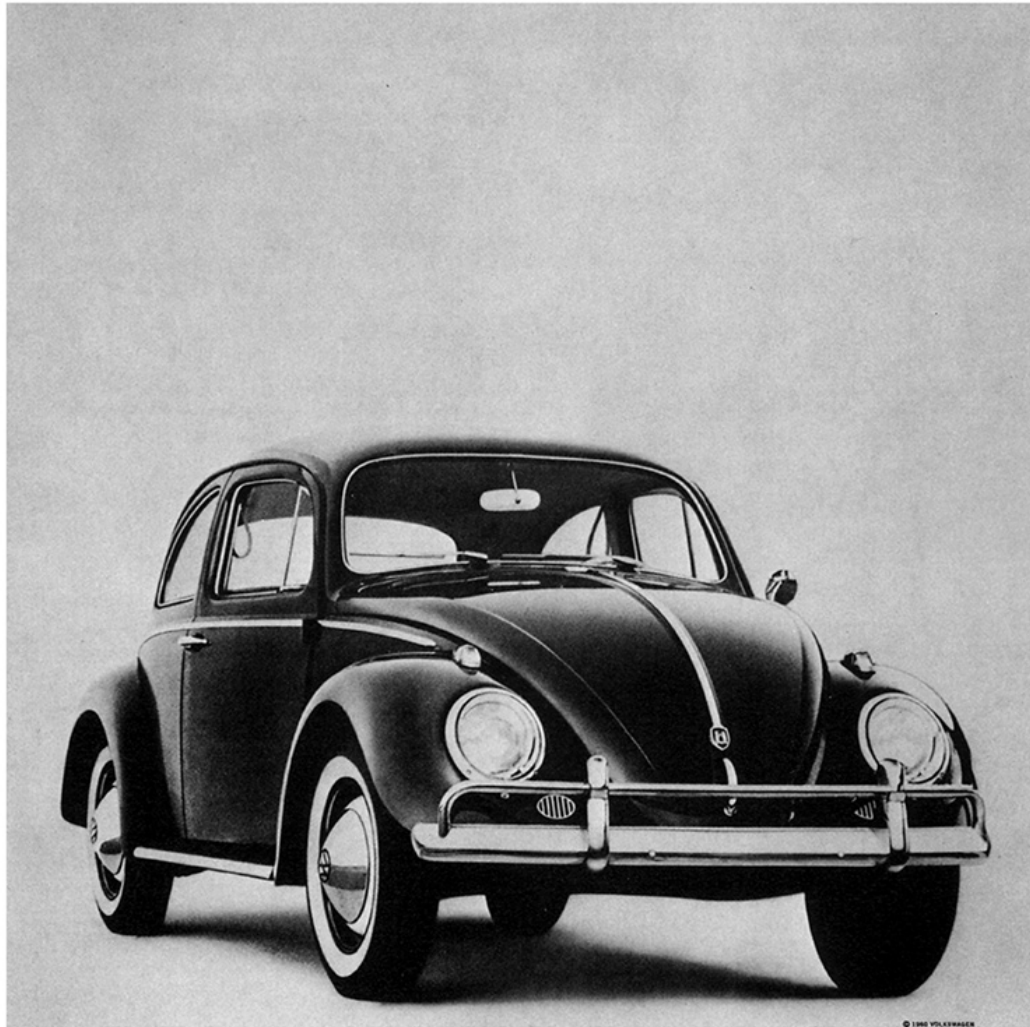


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lomlpJREDzw>

Frank copy.

Some copy will explain the ugly truth about the product. This approach doesn't start with the jewels of your goods - it's going to start with the warts. When selling a car, you might point out the negatives before you introduce the qualities. The curious thing is when you are honest and transparent about a product, the reader trusts you. They will be more likely to believe you when you point out the good qualities of your product.

VW print ad



Lemon.

This Volkswagen missed the boot.

The chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed it; Inspector Kurt Kroner did.

There are 3,389 men at our Wolfsburg factory with only one job: to inspect Volkswagens at each stage of production. (3000 Volkswagens are produced daily; there are more inspectors

than cars.)

Every shock absorber is tested (spot checking won't do), every windshield is scanned. VWs have been rejected for surface scratches barely visible to the eye.

Final inspection is really something! VW inspectors run each car off the line onto the Funktionsprüfstand (car test stand), tote up 189 check points, gun ahead to the automatic

brake stand, and say "no" to one VW out of fifty.

This preoccupation with detail means the VW lasts longer and requires less maintenance, by and large, than other cars. (It also means a used VW depreciates less than any other car.)



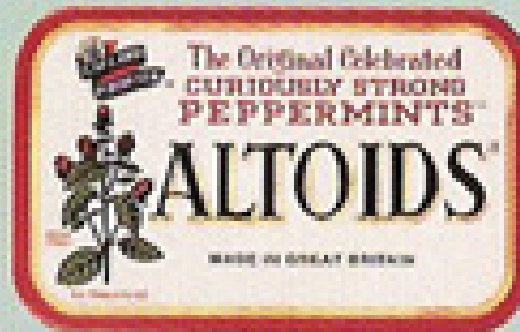
We pluck the lemons; you get the plums.

Hyperbole.

Hyperbole is when you use exaggerated statements or claims that are not meant to be taken literally. When done correctly this approach can highlight a product quality or benefit in a way that, although not necessarily true, makes the point perfectly. Be careful when you create hyperbole as it's often hard to make outlandish claims without sounding like you are hyping it up.

Altoids 48 sheet

**MINTS SO STRONG THEY
COME IN A METAL BOX.**



THE CURIOUSLY STRONG MINTS™

Rejection copy.

Rejection copy turns conventional wisdom on its head and tries to discourage people from being interested in the offer. This type of copy is a direct challenge to the reader. It leverages the idea that only an exclusive set of people are invited to use a product or service or take advantage of the offer. The American Express Black Card is a good example here - this card is reserved for the world's wealthiest and most elite. The only way you can get your hands on one is if you are invited.

Potential rejection startles readers - they don't expect to be turned down, especially not from an advertiser. This approach also keys into our sense of wanting to belong. It generates our curiosity and activates our pride. We think, "How dare they say I might not be good enough."

Royal Marines TV ad - 99.99% need not apply



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUcaM_0ztbM

DON'T BUY THIS JACKET



THIS SEASON, SHARE SOME VALUES
Learn more about our Common Threads Initiative,
and take the pledge to reduce consumption

TAKE THE PLEDGE



Don't try and say everything all at once.

Writing copy comes with responsibility. You need to develop the confidence and ability to make the right choices on what message you lead with, what you leave in and also what you leave out.

One final important point.

Formulas and guides are a very helpful start, and can take you so far. Ultimately, over time, you need to develop your own approach and this needs to be based on creativity. It should become a creative craft skill that people admire you for - they will in industry! You can mix, match or ignore these pointers altogether as long as you have one essential element – a brilliant idea.

You're never going to be able to write exquisite copy unless you can recognise it.

(This is one of the module outcomes!)

RESEARCH TASK

Use the internet to find examples of the copywriting styles that we have just looked at.

Plain copy

Storytelling copy

Conversational copy

Long copy

Literary copy

Endorsements and Testimonials

Frank copy

Rejection copy

Hyperbole

(Include these in your module submission by taking screen grabs of your chosen examples.)