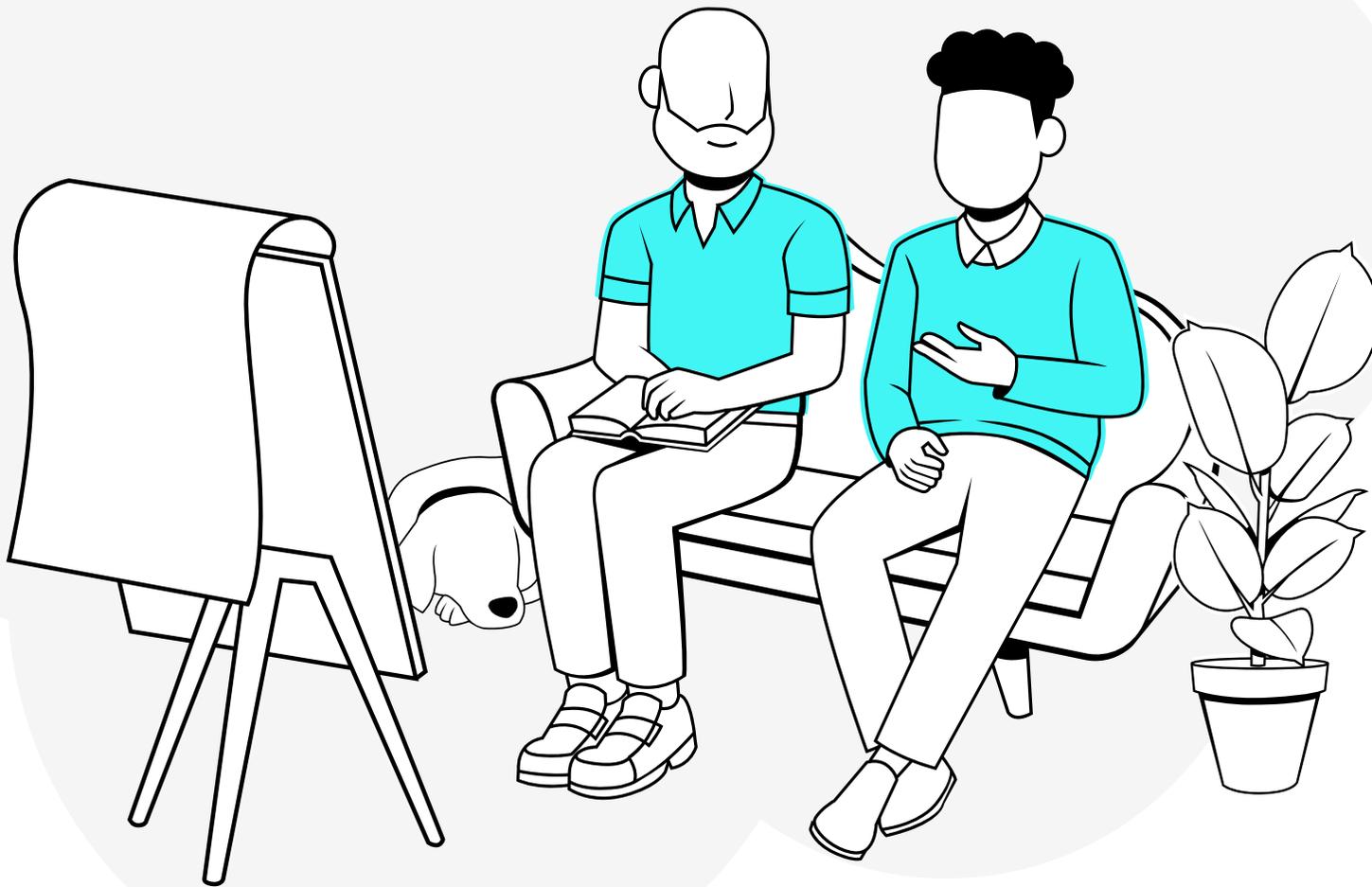


matchstick creative



Brand guidelines

TOV & Visual

What would you like to dive into?

Our Tone of Voice Guidelines

How we speak

TOV Guidelines

Our Visual Guidelines

How we look

Visual Guidelines

Or just carry on and absorb it all... 

Our Tone of Voice Guidelines

What we stand for and
how we speak.



Vision

Why our company exists

**To create a more equal world
through well-told stories and
shared experiences.**

Mission

What we do

**We help organisations who want
to create a positive impact
communicate clearly.**

**When we understand each other
better, great things happen.**

Value proposition

Why people want to work with us

**We create positive impact
through clear communication**

Company Values

Us, distilled.



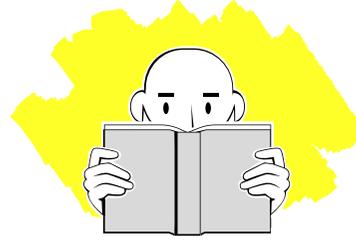
Be yourself

Our experiences, references and passions make us. Let's embrace them and bring them to work every day.



Collaboration over competition

Our work is made better by everyone who gets involved. Lift each other up and listen.



Always be learning

We're only as good as the last thing we learned. Possess a thirst for knowledge.



Care about quality

Well-delivered work helps to win us the work we want to work on. Quality is our mark.



Improvement not perfection

Strive to do better than to be the best. By practicing improvement we can get closer to 'done'.

How to refer to us

This is good

✓ **Matchstick Creative**
All external comms

✓ **MC**
Internal comms only

This is not so good (don't do this)

✗ **The Matchstick Creative**
Where's that 'the' coming from?
We're not a band. 

✗ **Matchstick**
This word looks lonely - only ever
'Matchstick' with 'Creative'.

✗ **Matchstickcreative**
Let the name breathe a gap is essential.

✗ **Creative Matchstick**
What are you, *drunk?*

Our Tone

Our tone can be distilled into two thoughts:

Informal, but informative

Clarity over cleverness

Writing Principles

Whenever we commit to write, we are doing so with purpose. Whether that be an email, a tweet or a strapline. We need to be aware of our audience and engage them. If they're kind enough to give us their time, the least we can do is educate, inspire or entertain them.

Empower

Whatever knowledge we share, it is with an aim to empower our audience.

We're all passionate about what we do, so let's empower our audience to feel the same. By explaining concepts and best practices in a way that furthers their understanding, we've already achieved what we set out to do. Share what you know so others can know it too.

Respect

Our audience is yet to know what you know. You have the honour of explaining it to them in a way they understand. Be respectful of their different backgrounds, needs and experiences. In this way, we can hope to create a more equal environment for learning and sharing stories.

Educate

There's so much noise, let's not add to it. Let's educate our audience about things they want and need to know. Tell them how we solved a problem for someone else, so they might solve it for themselves. Point them towards a helpful resource by someone we admire. Better yet, make the helpful resource. Educate our audience so they can make more informed decisions.

Style Guide

The essentials

UK spelling

Our preferred spelling is UK spelling. Get rid of those sneaky Z's in words like 'organisation'.

Capitalisation

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

- **ruth@matchstickcreative.co.uk**
- **matchstickcreative.co.uk**

Don't capitalise any of the following:

- website
- internet
- online
- email

Numbers

Write numbers under 10 as words and numbers over 10 as digits –

- **Five doggos in the office was a good balance**
- **11 doggos in the office was chaos**

Emojis 🤪 🙌 🖋️ 🧑

We love an emoji, but we're not 12 years old. Treat them like exclamation marks; use them sparingly so they have impact.

Style Guide

The essentials

Swearing #\$\$@&%*!

Whilst our founder swears like a sailor, it doesn't mean we should be effing and jeffing our way through every blog post.

Here are a few guidelines -

- Never swear when communicating with a client - even if they started it.
- Lean on acronyms to soften the blow i.e. "WTF"
- Avoid the 'harsher' swear words all together - you know what ones we mean.
- No 'C Bombs' or 'F bombs' unless it serves a creative purpose in a campaign. And has been signed off by our swearsy founder.

Active vs passive

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: Ruth logged into the account. ✓

No: The account was logged into by Ruth. ✗

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

“A sentence
is both the
opportunity and
limit of thought.”

Wendell Berry

Accessibility

- Create a hierarchy, with the most important information first
- Place similar topics in the same paragraph, and clearly separate different topics with headings
- Use plain language. Write short sentences and familiar words
- Hyperlink on a relevant phrase, rather than on a phrase like ‘click here’

Headings and subheadings

- Article titles are H2s
- Subheads are H3s
- Sub subheads are H4s
- Anything after that is formatted in bold

Guidelines

- For advice on capitalisation, swearing and emojis see our [Style Guide](#)
- To understand how to use common words, see our [Word List](#)
- For Disease, Disability, Disorders and Mental Health, see [Buzzfeed’s guide](#)
- For LGBTQ, see [Buzzfeed’s guide](#)
- For Race and Ethnicity see [Buzzfeed’s Guide](#)

Words in action

Word list ✓

add-on (noun, adjective)	e-commerce (the industry)	homepage	pop-up (noun, adjective)
add on (verb)	ePub	integrate	pop up (verb)
back end (noun)	email (never hyphenate, never capitalise unless it begins a sentence)	internet (never capitalize unless it begins a sentence)	pre-sale
back-end (adjective)	To name	login (noun, adjective)	product-market fit
best seller (noun)	From name	log in (verb)	signup (noun, adjective)
best-selling (adjective)	Reply-to name	Like (the social media activity)	sign up (verb)
beta	Subject line	multichannel	sync
brick-and-mortar	Cc, Bcc	nonprofit	third party (noun)
checkbox	emoji (singular and plural)	OK	third-party (adjective)
coworker	front end (noun)	online (never capitalize unless it begins a sentence)	tweet, retweet
click-through rate (CTR)	front-end (adjective)	opt-in (noun, adjective)	username
cost per click	geolocation	opt in (verb)	URL
double-click	hashtag	pay-per-click (PPC)	website
drop-down (noun, adjective)			WiFi
drop down (verb)			

This list has been taken from Mailchimp's excellent guide. If anything doesn't appear in this list, ask a senior team member.

Words in action

Words to avoid ✖

funnel, incentivise, leverage, disruption, thought leader, or other fluffy corporate terms

internets, interwebs, or any other variation of the word "internet"

ninja, rockstar, wizard, unicorn (unless referring to a literal ninja, rockstar, wizard, or unicorn) 

young, old, elderly, or any other word describing a person's age

crushing it, killing it

crazy, insane, or similar words to describe people

This list has been taken from Mailchimp's excellent guide. If anything doesn't appear in this list, ask a senior team member.

Use cases

Blog post title

//
**5 simple steps
to create a content
strategy for your
small business**

Why it works

- It's a listicle, which means there will be wayfaring throughout the article helping our reader to understand how much they have to read
- It's clear and easy to understand
- It's obvious who we are talking to; a small business owner



Use cases

Tweet



**We couldn't be happier
to hear one of our
#FemaleFounders is
opening up a second
location in Liverpool.
Massive congrats
@AwesomeWoman!**

Why it works

- At no point are we selling in this tweet, we are celebrating someone's success 
- Yes, there is an exclamation mark, but it has a purpose and reinforces our optimistic tone
- The tweet is easy to understand and reflects our desire to be part of our wider community

Use cases

Author's Bio

Ruth Hartnoll is our Founder and Content Director.

With every project she works on, she hopes to have a positive impact on the world. Outside of planning and creating engaging content, Ruth can be found getting involved in all sorts of things.

From being a Trustee for Awesome Liverpool, to being a mentor to young women through Halewood Academy's Future Female Leaders, Ruth loves nothing more than to work alongside other engaged, passionate people. You'll also frequently find her talking to her doggo Finn, as if he were a human.

Why it works

- It informs our reader and gets across the essentials, without being flat
- Friendly, informal expressions such as 'all sorts of things' are peppered in to give it energy and an approachable feel
- Some gentle humour is found towards the end, showing our human side

Further Reading



Eats, Shoots and Leaves – Lynne Truss
Grammar made easy

First you write a sentence – Joe Moran
Change the way you look at sentences

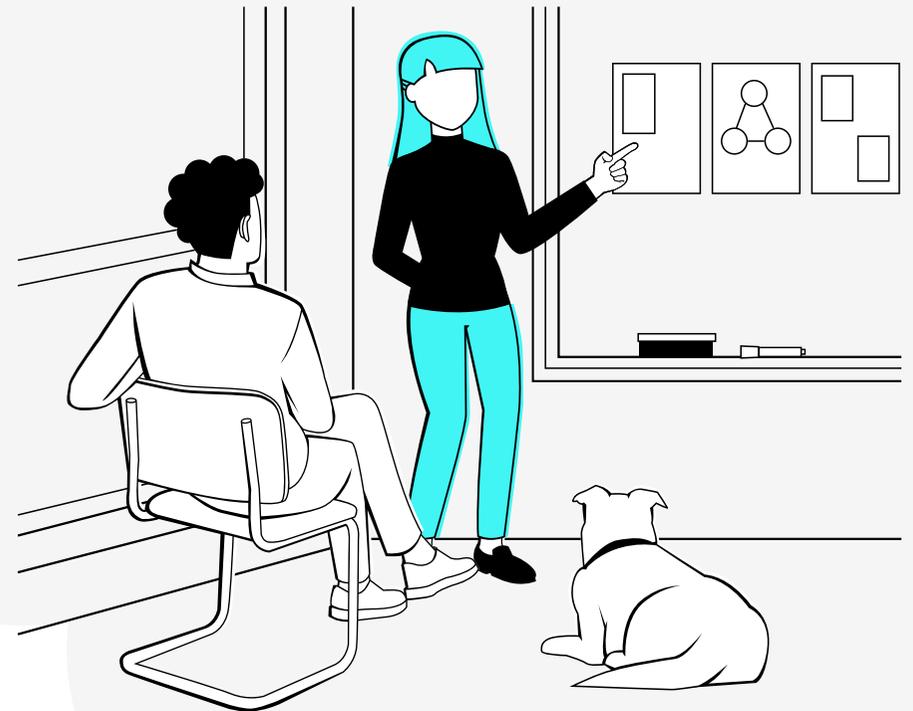
MailChimp Tone of Voice Guidelines
Voice by the masters of messaging

Column Five Brand Guidelines
An elegant style guide by top-notch storytellers

Bits of Code's Accessibility Cheat Sheet
Talk to everyone equally

Our Visual Guidelines

How to use our logo, colours,
typography and photography style.



Logo

Our logo is a visual representation of our identity; it's clean and approachable with a unique mark.

The strike above the 'i' represents our ability to spark ideas. It also highlights the processes we use to produce our best work.

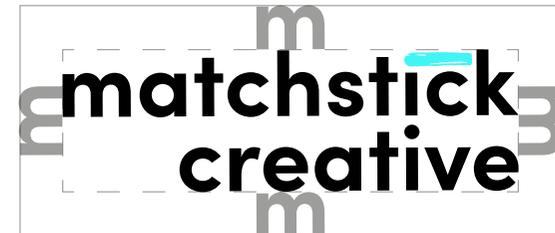
(Fig.1)

Use the 'm' from our logo as a safe space.

This helps to keep its legibility and prevents other brand elements getting all up in its personal space.

matchstick creative

Fig.1



Logo variations

(Fig.1)

Against a white background

The strike above our 'i' can be recreated in any of our five highlighter colours, whichever suits the situation best.

Against a coloured background

The highlight must be turned white. The letters must remain black. (Geez, bossy)

(Fig.2)

Sometimes a full logo can be a bit much (like social media avatars), in these instances we would use the 'm' on its own.

Against a white background

Feel free to use the coloured highlight behind the 'm'.

Against a coloured background

The highlight needs to be white, the 'm' looks suited and booted in black.

Fig.1

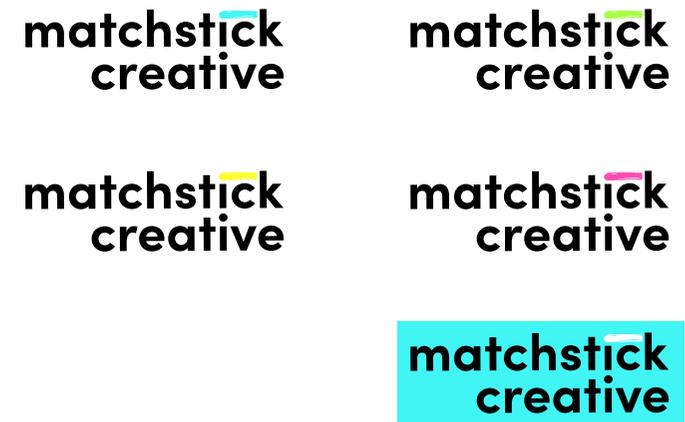


Fig.2



Logo alignment

(Fig.1)

Standard

Our logo feels most comfortable right aligned – we don't know why either, it's just what it said when we asked. Think 'right looks right'.

Special instances (ooh, exciting)

There are some special instances it can be used left and central aligned (like our awesome website) but keep these to a minimum.

(Fig.2)

Reduced logo

Our reduced logo plays by its own rules (and the ones in this document). It looks good anywhere – right, left, central. Put that puppy in wherever it looks good.

Note

The figures shown on the right are just guidelines for page placements – we don't have strict margins in place.

Fig.1

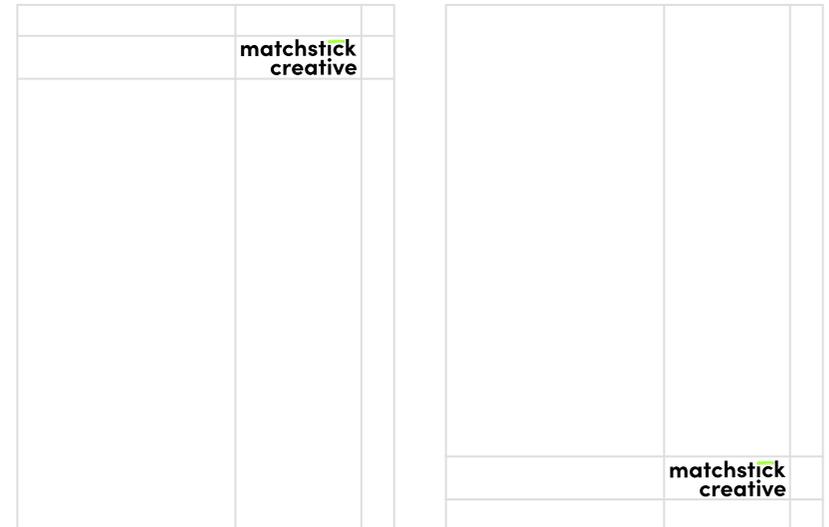
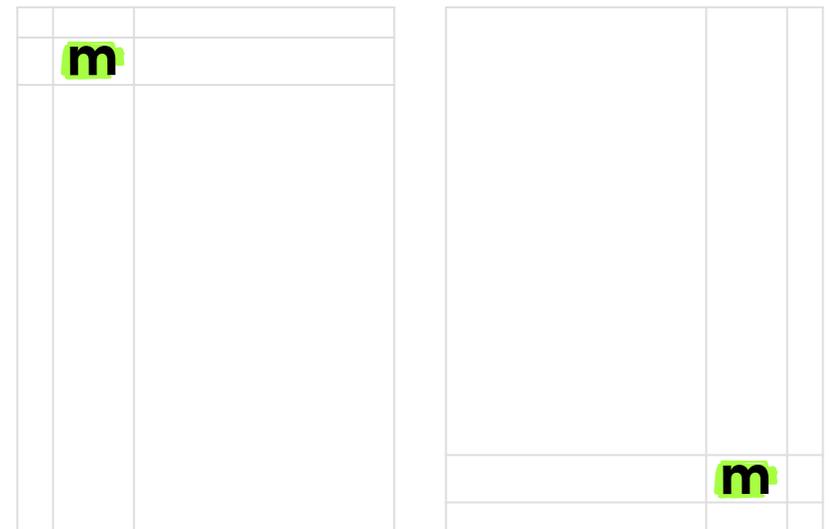


Fig.2

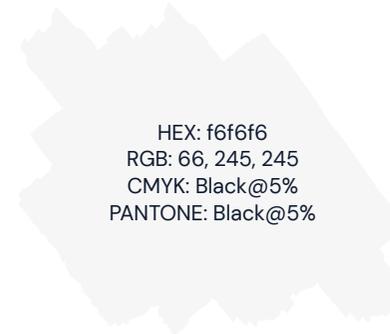
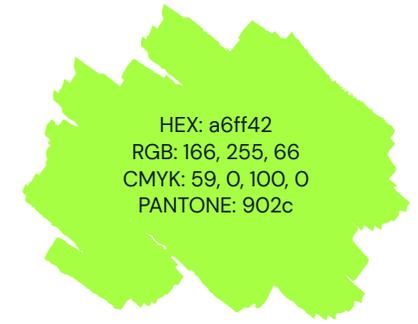


Colour

Our colours take inspiration from the highlight tones of post it notes.

These bright colours are to only be used as highlight, accent colours and never all together *wah my eyes!*. 

Our CMYK values are to be used as a last resort. We recommend printing in fabulous luminescent Pantone inks to get the full effect of our colours.



Typography

Our core font is DM Sans. It's clear, strong and has a slight friendliness to it.

We only use DM Sans Bold and DM Sans regular as weights. It just keeps things really simple and legible. Hierarchy should be created through size, colour and highlights.

DM Sans is a Google font and can be downloaded here:

<https://fonts.google.com/specimen/DM+Sans>

DM Sans Bold

**AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHh
IiJjKkLlMmNnOoPp
QqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz
1234567890!?**

DM Sans Regular

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHh
IiJjKkLlMmNnOoPp
QqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz
1234567890!?

Photography

Our photography style is light, airy and positive. People and process should be the focus of our brand photography. Natural shots of our team doing their thing, not posed or stocky. Close ups of scribbles & post its show our process and relay the brand colours through photography.

And lots of photos of Finn.
Finn is really photogenic.



Process markings

These are our process markings. They reflect the way we work when we mark up content and scribble down ideas. They shouldn't look too neat, and be used to highlight certain words.



Highlight



Circle



Marker



Strike highlight



Underline



Double underline



Highlight 2



Circle 2

Visual: Guidelines

In action

Improvement not perfection

matchstick
creative

Get your own snazzy guidelines

Contact our team to get your brand identity looking and sounding tip top

0151 203 5722

hello@matchstickcreative.co.uk

www.matchstickcreative.co.uk

