

# Avalanche Creative Style Guide

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## 1. Content Basics

### Standard Document Format

Please follow the instructions on our [Standard Document Formatting guide](#) to create a piece of content using our standard fonts (Open Sans, Poppins), weights, and spacing.

### Spelling & Grammar

Use [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) as your authority on correct or accepted spelling/usage.

We follow [AP Style](#) except for the following rules:

- Use the Oxford comma.
- Use singular “they” instead of “he or she.”

Use [Grammarly's Google Doc plugin](#) to catch minor typos. Keep in mind that Grammarly is not 100% accurate, so please check each recommendation yourself to ensure accuracy before implementation.

### Word Count

The word count for each blog post or webpage may vary depending on the keyword requirements and data for that piece. If you’re not sure, a good rule of thumb is 1,000 words. However, some may far exceed 1,000 words, such as guides or 101 pieces; additionally, depending on recommendations within the [SEMrush SEO Writing Assistant](#) extension or SEMrush itself, the keywords you’re targeting may require as few as 500 words.

Regardless, exceeding the minimum word count for your piece is rarely a problem—in fact, it’s often encouraged!

Certain pages, such as the client’s contact page or product pages, may need relatively little copy. Pages that are expected to have fewer words than normal will be flagged as such in the template. Typically, we don’t go lower than 700 words, even if SEMrush is recommending fewer. If you’re struggling to meet the minimum word count for your specific piece, please notify the Content Lead.

## Keywords

Make sure each keyword provided is used two to three times throughout the piece, and make sure to use them naturally in headings, too. Avoid overusing the keyword to prevent keyword stuffing. The SEMrush Writing Assistant can help you ensure keywords are used at least once, and it will notify you of potential keyword stuffing.

## Calls to Action

Generally, always include a call to action. If possible, include it at a natural point within the content piece. Add a dedicated CTA at the end of the piece if not previously mentioned elsewhere. Make sure it has its own H2 header.

## Client Style

Check the client overview document for each client (located in the client's folder in ClickUp) for guidance on industry-specific terminology, client voice, and other information regarding client style.

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## 2. Formatting

### Bulleted or Numbered Lists

Use bulleted lists instead of numbered lists unless you are outlining a specific step-by-step process in which the order is important. Bulleted lists are great to use and encouraged since Google can use them for featured snippets.

Feel free to expand upon a bullet point by bolding the introductory phrase and including one to three sentences after it. If you need four or more sentences to explain the item in full, get rid of the bulleted list and change your list into separate H3s or H4s with full paragraphs beneath them.

- **Example of a bulleted item:** You can format your bulleted item by bolding the first phrase. Make sure nothing is capitalized in the bolded phrase except for the first word.
- **When to use subheaders:** If you need more than a few sentences to explain each item, change it from a list into sections with their own subheaders.

Keep an eye on your punctuation in bulleted lists as well:

- **When to use punctuation:** If your bulleted list item is a full sentence, use proper punctuation.
- **When not to use punctuation:** When it's not a sentence

## Acronyms & Registered Terms

When introducing a new or branded term, refer to it in its entirety, including any registration marks, during your first reference. Include the acronym in parentheses following the term. Then, feel free to use the acronym in every following reference. For branded terms, feel free to drop the registration mark, trademark, copyright symbol, or other marking in every following reference.

- **Acronym example:** We specialize in search engine optimization (SEO). SEO can help your website.
- **Registered term example:** Invisalign® can help straighten your teeth. Many of our patients love Invisalign.

## Notes for Publishers/Designers/Developers

If you need to leave a note for a publisher, designer, or web developer, such as "Insert Google Maps module" or "Insert video," please bold your text and use brackets to indicate that this note is meant for whoever ends up publishing the piece. Writers can leave these notes as is and let the publisher address them. For example:

**[insert video]**

**[insert module of reviews]**

**[insert Google Maps with locations marked]**

## Reviews

Using Google Reviews is a great way to demonstrate the quality of our clients' products and services. If you are creating a product or service page, or a blog post with relevance to the client's customer service, it can be a good opportunity to use customer reviews. You may create a Reviews section and include 2–4 reviews, depending on length. Place them in quotes and attribute them to the user. You may make minor punctuation edits for clarity or use brackets to insert or alter missing or erroneous words. If you cut part of the review out for length or relevance, it should be represented with an ellipsis (...).

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## 3. Headers

### Order

Use normal order of headers (H2, then H3, then H4, etc.), saving H1 for the title. Use the same header weight for sections of similar educational weight (e.g., “What Is SEO?” and “What Is Keyword Research?” both being H2, even if one immediately follows the other).

### Capitalization

Capitalize all words of a title, header, or subheader except for:

- Articles (a, an, the)
- Coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so)
- Prepositions fewer than five letters (at, from, with, etc.)

### Bold & Italics

Feel free to use bold body text to organize your content when you cannot use headers or subheaders, such as bolding main ideas before they are explained in a bulleted list. Do not use italics as organizational formatting; use it only for emphasis, and use it sparingly.

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## 4. Links

### Internal Links

Use two to four internal links to the client’s site (related blog posts or pages are great) that provide more value for the reader, not just sign-up or contact links. For example, link to a glossary term or additional blog post for “search engine optimization,” not our contact page.

### External Links

Make sure to set any external links to open into new tabs. Use two to three high-quality sources, and NEVER link to direct competitors. Using statistics and other valuable data from highly authoritative external sources is a great way to add more SEO value to the piece.

## Anchor Text

Avoid using words like “click here” as anchor text. Specify where the link will take them and use that as the anchor text. (E.g., “We follow [AP Style](#)” instead of “We follow AP Style. [Click here to view the guide.](#)”)

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## 5. Metadata

### Meta Title

Meta titles should be 30–60 characters, use the main keyword, and use compelling title structures (e.g., How To, Ultimate Guide, 10 Tips, Top 5, etc.) without being clickbait.

### Meta Description

Meta descriptions should be 130–160 characters, use the main keyword, and use additional keywords if appropriate. They should describe what the piece accomplishes. Consider using your headers for inspiration for what to cover in the meta description.

### Slug

Try to limit the slug for the page or post to four or five words. Eliminate stopper words (the, a, and, etc.), especially if they aren’t necessary for the keyword phrase we are targeting.

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## 6. SEO Best Practices

### Content Quality

Our content must prioritize providing value to people first and foremost. Details are always encouraged for a thorough user experience, but we must prioritize providing answers.

For example, suppose a section in a piece of content focuses on the question, “What Is SEO?” The section should prioritize answering the question directly first, with concision and clarity. After that, the section can include examples of SEO, why SEO is important for helping users find a website, and important information to include with SEO.

Those familiar with journalism may recognize this format as the inverted pyramid structure. Similarly, there may be some instances where you'll summarize the content's full message first in a simplified passage, called the "nut graf."

## Professional and Expert Reviews

As a response to increased prevalence of AI-generated content, search engines are prioritizing expert- or enthusiast-reviewed content in its search rankings.

Almost every piece of content Avalanche creates must be reviewed prior to or immediately after publication. In addition to internal quality assurance, most clients will review a piece of content at least once. This satisfies requirements for the involvement of experts and enthusiasts who demonstrably know the topic.

## What to Avoid

This list may be subject to change.

- **Keyword stuffing:** There are instances where you may be able to fit keywords into a passage in ways that feel natural and organic from the reader's perspective. However, repeating target keywords more than a few times will prevent a page from ranking for that keyword altogether. Applications like SEMrush SEO Writing Assistant can help mitigate this risk.
- **Duplicating content:** While content may occasionally reiterate similar points across multiple pages or posts, these should be framed and phrased in a way that is original whenever possible.
- **Generated content:** Avalanche should not rely upon generative AI to develop finalized content. While helpful in the development process, we should never publish content directly after using a generative AI tool without reviewing it with our normal levels of quality assurance. For more information, refer to the [AI Code of Ethics](#).
- **Hidden text:** This is the act of using text that is the same color as the background, too tiny to read, or hidden behind an image for keyword stuffing. This is deceptive. Please note that this does not apply to content within collapsible widgets or with dynamic loading using JavaScript and other specialized code.

For a more thorough overview of SEO best practices, please review [Google's EAT standards](#).

## Sales Pages

Pages that are written to sell our products or services should:

- Have concise paragraphs.
- Utilize bulleted lists to allow space to breathe.
- Short, choppy copy that packs a punch.
- Not have walls of text.
- Don't use sentences that don't say anything.
- Focus on the outcome that customers will get from our service.
- Be focused on the reader's problem and what we can do to solve it.
- Sections of the page should avoid multiple paragraphs.
- Have really short sentences. They are easier to read.