



Changing how we write is often more impactful than how we look. It can really help us portray the sort of organisation the Union is and help us feel very different from the University. The Union is a fun place to be!

These are some tips to help you improve your communications and help people enjoy reading it.

## Basic rules

- Always use active voice, not passive. Change “students” or “our members” to “you”.
- Use “your Union”, not “USSU” or “Surrey Students’ Union” where you can.
- Write positively and try to avoid negative language if possible. But don’t censor or sugar coat negative things if they are true and important for our students to know.
- Talk about our achievements and how we’ve impacted ‘Your Surrey Life’. If we’ve done something great, we should talk about it and be proud of our achievements. We don’t boast, but we’re confident.
- Try to swap formal words for normal ones; remember our audience and try to write how you’d normally speak.
- Be conversational. Use punctuation to make your copy feel more natural (it’s fine to use brackets). Use contractions where appropriate to sound less formal.
- Think about how you format your communication. Try to use short headlines that begin with keywords. Have a first sentence that sums up the rest of your content; our members have limited time. It helps to use sub-headings at key points in your page if you have a long piece of information to communicate. People skim-read, this will help them find the right piece of information.
- Be confident in using plain and simple English, instead of hiding behind flowery language.
- Use the active voice to ensure content sounds lively.
- Use conversational language to avoid sounding stuffy or corporate.
- It’s fine to use emojis when we communicate, but they shouldn’t replace words. Use them to add a little extra personality to what you’re saying.
- Don’t exaggerate. We want to make our content sound fun and exciting, but this should not come at the expense of being honest!

## Active vs Passive Voice

The active voice is preferred because it places us and our students together at the centre of how we communicate. The phrases and topic matter written in an active voice are not complex or lengthy. They are not overly academic or formal, making it easier for our students to relate to our brand. Utilising the active voice projects a conversational tone that is direct and clear while establishing a sense of trust.

It is inclusive and inspires a call to action or a sense of control over an event rather than having it happen to the subject.

- Use first person narrative when talking about the Students’ Union (“we”, “us”, “our”).
- Use second person narrative when referring to the audience (“you” instead of “students”, etc.).