

KitForma.

PRACTICAL FIELD GUIDE

A Small Style Guide That Gets Used

Create six practical writing rules and test them against twenty
real-shaped interface messages

01

02

03

SAMPLE EDITION

ENGLISH / 1.0 / 2026

How to use this guide

Small teams writing product labels, help text and internal task instructions.

Create a limited style guide for a fictional file workspace. Includes twenty original before-and-after messages, behavior contexts, a glossary, an exception and a complete review scorecard.

- Tie writing rules to a specific audience and behavior contract.
- Distinguish terminology, action, state and recovery problems.
- Preserve literal filenames and product labels.
- Review twenty messages with named checks instead of invented quality scores.

Scope and limitations

- The fictional interface is not implemented or user-tested by this package.
- No conversion, readability or accessibility performance guarantee is made.
- Actual rendering and message triggers require separate application tests.

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A style guide should settle recurring decisions

A team style guide is useful when it helps two writers make the same important decision without asking the same question again. It becomes less useful when it tries to record every preference about language. This workbook builds a small guide around twenty original messages from a fictional file workspace called ClearDesk. The aim is not to invent a perfect brand voice. It is to make names, actions, states and recovery advice consistent enough to review.

The fictional product stores a project as a named working collection. Import adds a local file to that collection. Export creates a separate output file. Archive removes a project from the active list while retaining its content. Delete permanently removes the selected project under the exercise contract. The messages are teaching examples rather than copy from a real application, and no actual user study is claimed.

The initial message set has deliberate problems: the same object is called a case, workspace and project; buttons use inconsistent action labels; pending work is described as finished; errors blame the user or offer no recovery; and a literal filename is silently changed. Those are different kinds of issue. A punctuation preference should not receive the same review treatment as a false success message.

Your finished guide will contain six scoped rules, a short glossary, one explicit exception, twenty reviewed replacements and a scorecard that records named findings. The scorecard is not a scientific readability score or a prediction of conversion. It is a way to check whether particular rules have been applied to particular messages. If a message needs knowledge

of product behavior, the reviewer must obtain that knowledge rather than polishing an unsupported statement.

A useful first meeting is a short comparison exercise. Give two reviewers the same five messages and ask them to identify the problem before showing the proposed rules. If one reviewer discusses tone while the other identifies a false success state, that difference reveals what the guide needs to prioritize. Record the disagreement as a concrete example. Do not resolve it by asking which reviewer sounds more confident; use the product contract and the reader's task to decide what the message must communicate.

Sources and tools

[S1] Digital.gov plain language guide series

<https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language/>

Checked: 2026-10-01

[S2] Google Technical Writing One

<https://developers.google.com/tech-writing/one>

Checked: 2026-10-01

Text Diff

Optional comparison of short copy revisions; it does not validate product meaning.

<https://kitforma.com/en/text-diff/>

Inside the complete guide

Begin with readers and actual states

Rule one: one product object, one preferred name

Rule two: name actions by what they do

Rule three: state only what has happened

Rule four: make recovery advice specific

Rules five and six: preserve literals and limit polish

Build a review scorecard without fake precision

Capstone: edit twenty messages and one exception

Answer key and keeping the guide small