

ORU Website Content Style Guide

Oral Roberts University pledges to offer a “Royal Standard” to its students. This is embodied through a high standard of education and Holy Spirit-empowered leadership. Furthermore, it is most visible on our website. Since the website is our front door to the globe, our content must adhere by royal standards. This guide is to be treated as the ORU brand standard for all website writing.

1: Writing Goals and Principles

With every piece of content we publish, we aim to:

- **Educate.** As a writer, you are a tour guide for Oral Roberts University. Tell readers what *they* want and need to know, not what *we* want to say. Give exact information, along with opportunities to learn more. You’re the expert. Assume your readers are international. Don’t assume your readers have access to everything you know.
- **Encourage.** Whatever you write, be mindful: *How* you say something is just as important as *what* you say. Imagine sitting face-to-face with your reader. Instead of just exchanging information, inspire, build up, and leave a positive impact no matter the subject matter.
- **Empower.** Everything we write should provide our readers with more clarity and confidence, not confusion and frustration. Make clear **calls to action**, and champion individuals as they follow Christ.
- **Equip.** Whether you’re leading them through a process or discussing a specific degree program, be sure to communicate in a friendly and helpful way that leaves the reader with the tools, information, and resources they need to accomplish their next step.
- **Embody.** At the end of the day, you represent ORU, and **ORU represents Jesus Christ**. We don’t market to consumers, **we communicate with people made in the image of God**. Prayerfully put yourself in their shoes and write with integrity.

In order to achieve those goals, we make sure our content is:

- **Clear.** Understand the topic you’re writing about. Use simple words and sentences.
- **Concise:** Limit the amount of words on a page. Instead of multiple paragraphs, think how can I say this in one?
- **Useful.** Before you start writing, ask yourself: What purpose does this serve? Who is going to read it? What do they need to know?
- **Friendly.** Write like a human. Don’t be afraid to break a few rules if it makes your writing more relatable. All of our content should be warm and human.
- **Appropriate.** Write in a way that suits the situation. Just like you do in face-to-face conversations, adapt your tone to whom you’re writing and what you’re writing about.
- **Global:** Write in a manner that will be understandable to someone outside of ORU. What does “Whole Person” mean to someone outside the ORU community? Remember that an international person may not know what terms like “FAFSA” mean.

2: Voice and Tone

To write empowering and effective content, ORU writers must be aware of our **voice** and our **tone**. This section explains the difference between voice and tone, and lays out the elements of each as they apply to Oral Roberts University.

What's the difference between voice and tone? Voice is the overarching style of content. Tone shifts the mood to the audience you are trying to reach. You might use one tone when you're socializing with friends and a different tone when you're with your boss. Tone meets the reader with where they are at in age, emotion and perspective.

ORU's voice doesn't change from day to day, but our tone changes frequently depending on whom we are addressing.

Voice

At ORU, we know that navigating the in's and out's of higher education can be a minefield of confusing terminology and processes. ORU writers should speak as experienced and compassionate university guides.

As ORU writers, we treat every person with dignity, respect and the love of Christ as individuals made in the image of God. **When individuals access and read content published by ORU, we want them to experience the core values behind our institution without patronizing or confusing them.** Part of not patronizing or confusing them means that we write everything with clarity and passion. We don't assume a person's level of spirituality or overuse church jargon. We tend to error on the side of over-simplifying rather than assumption. (i.e. what does Whole Person mean? What spirit are we talking about? The Holy Spirit!)

We speak with a **passionate, conversational formality**. We are not so formal in our voice that we come across as elitist. We do not speak with such informality that we undermine our academic prestige. **We prefer to speak directly to our audience** rather than referring to ourselves. "YOU will be empowered to meet YOUR goals." "YOUR son will graduate equipped as a leader in his industry." ORU's voice is light of heart and highly optimistic. For more student-involvement-type pieces, our voice may verge on the side of a **excited, competitive school spirit** instead of wit or sarcasm.

Using "We"

As an institution we do use "we." It has been journalistic standard to always refer to an institution as "it", but we feel this is impersonal. How do we use "we?" First, on a web page, we must ask, "Who is talking?" Let's say that it is an Admissions page. Therefore, chances are, the content is coming from an enrollment counselor. This changes how "we" is worded, and the information that should be shared on that page.

Using "You"

As an institution, we use "you" frequently. It is a conversation, but it's not coffee-shop informal. Between the spectrum of intimate friend and detached corporation, we fall right in the line of a passionate, polite college counselor.

The second thing we do before writing on a page is to ask, “Who is our audience?” If it is an undergraduate student, then now we have the two piece of the puzzle. From the earlier section, we are an enrollment counselor now talking to an undergraduate student.

Bringing it together: “We” and “You”

So how do these two personas work? Our job and (writing format) is to offer the benefits of our university through the “we” and then bring how “you” fits into what we offer.

i.e. We offer 150+ majors, minors and pre-professional degrees— all catered to empower your calling. You won't be alone! At ORU, you will learn alongside passionate, purpose-driven students from countries across the globe.

Some Key Points to Remember

1. **We are led by the Spirit.** We write with a bigger mission in mind: the work of Christ's Kingdom in and through our institution and the individuals reading our content. This means we write prayerfully, with integrity. We build people up. We don't tear them down.
2. **We are plainspoken.** We understand the world our prospective students, alumni and constituents are living in: one muddled by hyperbolic language, upsells, and over-promises. We strip all that away and value clarity above all. Because individuals turn to ORU for an education or for investment, we avoid distractions like fluffy metaphors and cheap plays to emotion.
3. **We are genuine.** We understand our readers because we were one not too long ago or we are one now. That means we relate to our audience's challenges and passions and speak to them conversationally in a familiar, warm, and accessible way.
4. **We are translators.** Only experts can make what's difficult look easy, and **it's our job to demystify university-speak and actually inform and assist.**

Tone

Our tone is usually conversational. We always error on the side of clarity rather than entertainment. Since we analyze our audience before writing, consider the reader's state of mind. Are they anxious as they explore what the Lord is calling them to next? Are they confused about their child's financial aid and seeking help? Are they excited about the university? If you understand your audience's emotional state and perspective, you can adjust your tone.

Style Tips

Here are a few key elements of writing ORU's voice. For more, see the Grammar and Mechanics section.

- **Use active voice.** Use active voice. Avoid passive voice.
- **Talk to your audience.**
- **Avoid slang and jargon.** Write in plain English.
- **Write positively.** Use positive language rather than negative language.
- **Maintain the Royal Standard.** Remember our focus as the premiere Spirit-empowered university in the world. We want to emphasize that our university stands out for it's Whole Person Education brand and focus on raising up students who are strong leaders. Let that flavor what you chose to showcase in your content.